

AN EXPLORATORY MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF FACTORS PROMOTING HOPE,
ENGAGEMENT, AND WELL-BEING IN HIGH-PERFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

By

Copyright 2013

Christina L. Khan

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Psychology and Research in Education and the
Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology.

Chairperson James W. Lichtenberg, Ph.D.

Thomas S. Krieshok, Ph.D.

Shane J. Lopez, Ph.D.

David M. Hansen, Ph.D.

Heidi L. Hallman, Ph.D.

Date Defended: September 6, 2013

The Dissertation Committee for Christina L. Khan
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

AN EXPLORATORY MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF FACTORS PROMOTING HOPE,
ENGAGEMENT, AND WELL-BEING IN HIGH-PERFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Chairperson James W. Lichtenberg, Ph.D.

Date approved: September 9, 2013

Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study was to investigate the factors that facilitate the development of hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students. The Gallup Student Poll (GSP; Lopez, Agrawal, & Calderon, 2010) is a 20-item measure that taps the constructs of hope, engagement, and well-being in students in grades 5-12. The GSP was administered in the fall of 2009 to 246,682 students in 905 schools in the United States and again in the fall of 2010 to 266,971 students in 1,043 schools in the United States (Calderon, 2011). Three middle schools that participated in the GSP in 2010 and scored in the upper quartiles of the Readiness for the Future Index (RFI), the composite index of hope, engagement, and well-being scores, were selected and participated in this study. The research questions investigated (a) how schools used the data from the GSP, (b) how educators perceived they were influencing hope, engagement, and well-being in students, (c) what factors educators believed affected their intervention efforts, and (d) how schools compared with one another in their responses to the three previous questions. Twelve focus groups (four per school) were conducted with teams of teachers from each school. Observations of school climate were also conducted on the same day as the focus group at each school. Focus group transcripts and observation field notes were coded for themes. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative and triangulation methods for individual cases and cross-case analysis. The findings from the cross-case comparisons indicated that the schools varied in their approach to using the GSP data. Two meta-themes emerged concerning the strategies that educators in the three schools felt were effective in boosting hope, engagement, and well-being: (a) creating an environment that fosters positive interactions and (b) providing an array of support strategies. Within the meta-themes, patterns of sub-themes were also noted. Five strategies corresponding to the first meta-theme were

identified: (a) creating a positive and supportive atmosphere, (b) building relationships with students, (c) communicating clear expectations with consistent responses, (d) encouraging positive peer interactions, and (e) enhancing staff well-being. In terms of the second meta-theme, five different strategies were reported: (a) providing adequate support staff (e.g., counselors, police officers, nurses), (b) offering numerous structured extracurricular activities, (c) offering many ways for students to obtain academic help, (d) collaborating with other staff members to problem-solve around obstacles to student success, and (e) using quality instructional practices. Educators identified several factors that they believed impacted their efforts to help students become more hopeful, engaged, and thriving students. These factors are organized within an ecological systems theory framework. A discussion of the limitations of the study and directions for future research are presented.

Acknowledgements

My road to becoming a counseling psychologist has been paved with support from numerous people along the way, and I would be remiss without taking this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude. I would like to thank my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Jim Lichtenberg, for his patience, persistence, and good humor while helping me navigate the path to completing my degree. I truly appreciate his wisdom and willingness to sprint along side me to the finish line. I would like to thank Dr. Tom Krieshok, for his kindness and advice, which helped to make the difficult parts of this journey easier to travel. I would like to thank Dr. Shane Lopez for introducing me to positive psychology, especially hope, which changed the trajectory of my professional career. I would like to thank Dave Hansen for being patient, persistent, and gently prodding me to carry on during the writing process. A special thank you goes to Heidi Hallman for her willingness to step in on short notice and serve on my committee. I would also like to thank Nancy Baym and Mary Lynn Hamilton for their guidance in designing this study and analyzing the data.

Thank you to the Gallup Organization for providing me with access to the Gallup Student Poll data. I would specifically like to thank Valerie Calderon for helping me to contact the schools and answering my questions about the data. I am also sincerely grateful for the educators who agreed to participate in this study. They are amazing at what they do every day, and I am so impressed by their support for each other and their dedication to changing lives, one student at a time.

To my fellow graduate students, particularly Barb, Brett, Toy, and Abbey: thank you for sharing the laughter, the tears, and the craziness of graduate school with me for the past few years. I would also like to thank Caroline Handwork for her friendship and words of

encouragement. To my friends outside of graduate school: thank you for listening to me and cheering me on, even when I wanted to stop. Because of your support, I was able to press on and pursue this goal.

I could never have started this journey without the support of my family, and I certainly would not be completing it without their efforts on my behalf. Thank you, Aunt Linda and Uncle Jerry, for proofreading my manuscript. Mary Beth and Brett, thanks for being my cheerleaders. Mom and Dad, my heart overflows with gratitude for everything you have done to help me achieve this dream. I love you so much and I hope I've made you proud.

And finally, to my husband, Dave: We've been through a lot during my time in graduate school. Without your support—putting up with my late nights on the computer, reading draft after draft, talking me down, building me up, and reminding me that, “I *can* do this”—I don't think I would have finished this manuscript or this degree. You are an incredible partner, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I love you.

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: <i>2010-2011 School Year Student Demographic Data</i>	63
Table 2: <i>Focus Group Participant Demographics</i>	66
Table 3: <i>Fall 2010 GSP Data for PRMS and the National Cohort Samples</i>	76
Table 4: <i>Fall 2010 GSP Data for WLMS and the National Cohort Samples</i>	111
Table 5: <i>Fall 2010 GSP Data for SBMS and the National Cohort Samples</i>	138
Table 6: <i>Fall 2010 GSP Data for PRMS, WLMS, SBMS, and the National Cohort Samples</i>	156
Table 7: <i>Cross-case Comparison of Schools' Use of GSP Data</i>	157
Table 8: <i>Cross-case Comparison of Schools' Perceived Interventions</i>	159
<i>Figure 1: Meta-themes and related strategies of interventions presumed to influence the development of hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students.</i>	161
Table 9: <i>Cross-case comparison of School's Perceived Factors that Affect Intervention</i>	169

Note: The names of all schools and participants have been changed to pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Tables and Figures	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions	3
Research Approach	4
Assumptions.....	4
The Researcher.....	5
Rationale and Significance	6
Definitions of Key Terminology.....	7
Review of the Literature	9
Academic Reform Movements in the United States.....	10
The Gallup Student Poll.....	13
Hope.....	13
Engagement.....	27
Well-Being.....	43
Overall Summary of the Literature	54
Methodology.....	56
Overview and Rationale for Case Study Methodology	56

The Gallup Student Poll.....	57
Sample and Participant Selection.....	60
Research Context	62
Participants' Characteristics.....	65
Data-Collection Methods	68
Observations	69
Focus Groups	69
Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis	71
Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	71
Reliability.....	72
Summary	72
Results.....	74
Prairie Range Middle School	74
Wooded Lake Middle School	109
Sheridan Bridge Middle School.....	136
Summary	152
Cross-case Analysis and Interpretation.....	153
Use of the Gallup Student Poll.....	153
Perceived School Interventions that Influence Hope, Engagement, and Well-Being	158
Theme 1: Develop an environment fostering positive interpersonal interactions	161
Theme 2: Provide an array of resources supporting students' development	166
Perceived Factors that Affect Schools' Intervention Efforts	168
Summary of Interpretation of Findings.....	173

Discussion	175
Summary and Discussion of Findings	176
Limitations of the Current Study	190
Directions for Future Research	192
Overall Conclusions	193
References	195
Appendix A	212
Appendix B	213
Appendix C	215
Appendix D	216
Appendix E	218

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In an effort to improve academic achievement among students in the United States, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), ushering in a new era of accountability in American Education. NCLB created unprecedented mandates for schools to ensure that student learning and progress are occurring, including tying the funding schools receive to the results of their academic achievement scores. Some of the by-products of this law have been positive. For instance, because schools are being held accountable for what students are learning, schools have been more likely to examine their current curricular and instructional practices and to implement changes in efforts to improve their scores. Additionally, a plethora of curricular interventions to improve skills in the core areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies have emerged, many of which are empirically supported. However, because the focus of education has shifted to academic outcomes like test scores and attendance, the resulting pressure on schools to increase academic achievement has led to increased stress levels for teachers and students, which can result in burnout and greater dropout rates (Gordon, 2006).

Unfortunately, the indicators of academic achievement that schools are required to report to the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., statistically significant and continuous improvement of all students on academic assessments, graduation rates, and “other academic indicators” like achievement on locally administered assessments, decreases in grade-to-grade retention rates, attendance rates, and changes in percentages of students enrolled in gifted, advanced placement, and college preparatory courses) do not provide enough information about all of the variables

that affect student learning. Most of the educational reform efforts have focused on curriculum and teaching techniques, as well as how to better measure those results. However, an aspect that often is acknowledged but seems to be overlooked is the impact of mental health on school performance (Gordon, 2006). When one's mental health is optimal, one feels hopeful about the future, is more engaged, and feels happier (Keyes, 2006), which leads to better success in school and in work (Lopez, et al., 2010; Wagner & Harter, 2006; Gordon, 2013). In this regard, the psychosocial aspects of learning are important as they, along with cognitive strategies, impact the learning process.

Without consideration of the breadth of factors contributing to student learning, educators' efforts to revise their curricular and instructional methods in order to maximize their students' learning potential may only be addressing cognitive and behavioral aspects of student learning. Understanding how schools promote emotional and psychosocial factors that are strongly related to student achievement and can be changed, in addition to the cognitive and behavioral factors, may lead to development of interventions aimed at developing the whole person and ultimately greater achievement in America's schools.

To this end, the Gallup Organization and America's Promise Organization partnered to develop the Gallup Student Poll (GSP; Lopez, et al., 2010). The GSP is the only nationally administered measure of its kind that reliably measures the psychosocial qualities of student hope, engagement, and well-being from the students' point of view (Lopez, et al., 2010). The GSP was administered in the fall of 2009 to 246,682 students in 905 schools in the United States and again in the fall of 2010 to 266,971 students in 1,043 schools in the United States (Calderon, 2011). Due to the large sample size and national representation of the data set, as well as the fact that this measure simultaneously looks at three emotional and psychosocial factors that are

related to student learning, the GSP was the primary measure of student hope, engagement, and well-being in the schools identified in this study. The data reported in this study are drawn from raw data from the middle schools that completed the survey in the fall of 2010 (Gallup, 2010b).

The quantitative validation data from the GSP has supported the hypothesis that student success is predicted, in part, by hope, engagement, and well-being (Lopez, 2011a). However, the literature has not yet been able to explain *how* schools are using the data from the GSP to impact these factors at a practical level. This exploratory, qualitative multiple-case study aims to examine the existing practices in schools that influence the psychosocial factors measured by the GSP, namely hope, engagement, and well-being, so that future interventions may be developed that will enhance student academic success.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the current study was (a) to better understand how schools are using the GSP data to inform their practice, and (b) to investigate the conditions that facilitate the development of hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students. Given that the sample for this study was derived from schools that have administered the GSP to their student populations, it was reasonable to examine how schools are using the data from this measure. Specifically, this study sought to better understand the perceived strategies and practices that schools are currently using to address student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. It is likely that the success or failure of some interventions is mitigated by factors such as stakeholder attitudes and beliefs, community resources, and other external environmental factors. Therefore, this study also attempted to identify the factors that may impact how schools influence hope, engagement, and well-being. Thus, the central research questions for this proposed study are:

1. How are middle school educators using the GSP data?

2. How do middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being among their students?
3. What factors affect how middle school educators influence student hope, engagement, and well-being?
4. What are the similarities and differences between middle school educators' approaches to influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being?

Research Approach

Since the research questions in this study were aimed at developing a richer understanding of *how* middle schools are using the GSP data and influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being, as well as the conditions that serve to facilitate or undermine school's efforts, a qualitative research design was appropriate (Maxwell, 2005). Case study methodology is the preferred method when the aim is to understand *how* or *why* a contemporary social phenomenon works within the real-world context in which the researcher has little control over the events being studied (Yin, 2009; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). In order provide support for the findings of one case study, as well as identify rival explanations for the results, this study used a multiple-case, replication design (Yin, 2009). The data were collected and triangulated from multiple sources at each site (e.g., survey data, four focus group interviews, direct observations, websites) as a way to minimize participant bias and enhance validity (Yin, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). The constant comparative method of data analysis (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was appropriate for these data and was used throughout the data collection and analysis process. Further explanation of this process is discussed in the Method section.

Assumptions

1. Schools are complex systems with multiple factors that impact their functioning, including policies, resources, and interactions between multiple stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members).
2. The Gallup Student Poll results are accurate representations of students' hope, engagement, and well-being levels.
3. Educators have expert professional knowledge of their efforts to improve students' learning and are a good source of information about the practices and attitudes that exist in schools.
4. Educators interviewed in this study were honest in their responses.

The Researcher

As a former high school teacher, my status as teacher may have allowed me to quickly form a rapport with the educators who participated in the interviews, allowing me to gain insider status more readily. Additionally, the schools that participated in this study are from the same school district in which I previously taught. Thus, I was familiar with the district policies and procedures and had a general sense of the surrounding community and culture, and I had been to a district-wide professional development training at one of the middle schools. Although I took copious field notes and attempted to document school practices as I saw them naturally occurring, it is possible that my teaching background in this district may have prevented me from viewing school practices from an unbiased perspective. When I conducted the focus groups (see Method section), I realized that I knew two of the teachers from prior professional interactions, which may have favorably biased my interpretation of their answers. To minimize the potential bias, I triangulated the data from the observations and multiple focus group interviews at each site.

Although my research interests lie in positive psychology, I took care to present a balanced perspective of the practices in schools and had several people who were not particularly strong proponents of positive psychology review my work throughout the research process and offer feedback. Additionally, I was an instructor for Gallup and have an interest in the research surrounding the GSP, which facilitated my access to the GSP data and the schools included in this study. The participants in the focus group were aware of my connection to Gallup as a necessary part of gaining access to their schools, so it is possible that my affiliation with Gallup may have influenced participant responses.

Rationale and Significance

This study was an attempt to fill a gap in the literature. The quantitative studies of the GSP (Gallup, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d; Lopez, 2009, 2011c, 2011a; Lopez, et al., 2010) demonstrate that student academic success is predicted in part by hope, engagement, and well-being factors, but the data collected thus far cannot explain *whether* or *how* schools are influencing these variables (e.g., which strategies seem to enhance these factors, and which practices seem to detract from these factors). Thus, the use of qualitative methods was appropriate in this study because more information is needed to inform a larger scale quantitative study (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips, & Davidson, 2007).

Since the Gallup Student Poll is unique in its measurement of three psychosocial variables that are directly related to student achievement, the literature is scant about how to improve all three variables within a school at the same time. To this researcher's knowledge, no other qualitative study has been conducted that specifically investigates *how* educators in schools that are using the GSP believe they are comprehensively impacting hope, engagement, and well-being in their students. Other quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted to

understand educational practices that might separately impact hope (Marques, Lopez, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011; Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008; Pedrotti, Lopez, Edwards, Bouwkamp, & Krieshok, 2001; Seirup & Rose, 2011; Sheehan & Rall, 2011), engagement (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Christenson et al., 2008; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder Jr., 2004; Finn, 1993; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Garza, 2009; Holloway, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; Lambert, 2007; Ozer, Wolf, & Kong, 2008; Sharkey, You, & Schnobelen, 2008; Woolley & Bowen, 2007) and well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Suldo, Huebner, Friedrich, & Gilman, 2009). However, no studies have attempted to explain how schools simultaneously impact all three factors (hope, engagement, and well-being). Additionally, it is unclear whether and how schools are actually using the GSP data to drive their decision-making around interventions to improve student success. Therefore, it was hoped that this qualitative study of how schools approach developing hope, engagement, and well-being in students might lead to a better understanding of which practices educators perceived influence these phenomena in their students. Ultimately, follow-up studies might involve developing best practice guidelines or interventions and asking schools to implement and see if these practices yield reproducible GSP results.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Hope. Snyder's cognitive Hope Theory (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1994) was the model used in this study. Snyder defined hope as "goal-directed thinking in which the person utilizes pathways thinking (the perceived capacity to find routes to desired goals) and agency thinking (the requisite motivations to use those routes)" (in Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 189). The GSP defines hope as "the ideas and energy students have for the future" (Lopez, 2009).

Engagement. Griffiths, Sharkey, and Furlong (2009) have pointed out that although definitions of engagement differ among researchers, the common belief held by researchers is that engagement is multidimensional and taps a student's feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors related to school. The GSP defines engagement as "involvement in and enthusiasm for school" (Lopez, 2009).

Well-being. Separate lines of research have defined well-being as hedonic (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction, more positive than negative emotions over time) or as eudaimonic (e.g., psychological and social wellbeing; Keyes, 2006). In this study, well-being was defined in primarily hedonic terms of life satisfaction, that is, "people's evaluations of their lives...that are both cognitive and affective" (Diener, 2000, p. 34). The GSP defines well-being as "how students think about their lives in the present and in the future" (Lopez, 2009).

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to explore what is known about topics of this study, namely the Gallup Student Poll (GSP; Lopez, et al., 2010) and its related constructs: hope, student engagement, and well-being. The literature related to the GSP is limited and has primarily been conducted by the Gallup organization, as it has sole proprietary rights to the instrument's use. Because few studies have been conducted using the GSP as a measure, this chapter also reviews the separate bodies of literature regarding hope, engagement, and well-being.

For over 30 years, researchers from the disciplines of clinical psychology, social psychology, education, and medicine have independently studied the separate concepts of hope, engagement, and well-being, creating an expansive, multi-disciplinary body of literature. Due to the large number of available research studies, a comprehensive review of the literature related to each construct is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, this discussion is limited to a review of educational and psychological studies that are closely related to the study of hope, engagement, and well-being of adolescents in school settings. Studies pertaining to the three constructs in the fields of medicine, nursing, and psychotherapy are not included in this review.

This chapter begins with an overview of the academic reform movements in the United States to provide context for the current educational climate, setting the stage for the development of the GSP. An overview of the development of the GSP and related studies follows. Next, the literature related to each individual construct that comprise the GSP (i.e., hope, engagement, and well-being) is reviewed, focusing on how each is related to academic outcomes and can be developed through specific interventions. The chapter concludes with an

interpretive summary that shows how the literature has informed my understanding of the problem and contributed to the development of the conceptual framework for this study.

Academic Reform Movements in the United States

Over the last 40 years, increasing attention has been given to the state of education in the United States, beginning with the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), followed by the commissioned report of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and the current reauthorization of ESEA, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). These reports and laws are concerned with how to improve the quality of students' education, and they offer numerous recommendations or mandated standards to increase academic achievement in America's schools.

NCLB posits that every child can learn and is entitled to a high-quality education. It is difficult to argue with this ideal, and most educators agree with the spirit of the law. However, the law has received harsh criticism from educators and even the U.S. Secretary of Education for its one-size-fits-all approach to ensuring that academic achievement occurs for all children (Duncan, 2012). By law, schools are expected to demonstrate that all students enrolled in their buildings make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and score at the proficient level in math, reading, and science by 2012. Schools in which students fail to reach proficiency as measured by standardized tests face penalties including loss of funding, "corrective action," and "restructuring" of the school's governance by local educational agencies (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

NCLB does not clearly define the term "academic achievement," instead leaving it up to each state to define and operationalize "challenging academic standards" and "challenging achievement standards." The law does stipulate, however, that AYP is evaluated in terms of

statistically significant and continuous improvement of all students on academic assessments, graduation rates, and “other academic indicators” (e.g., achievement on locally administered assessments, decreases in grade-to-grade retention rates, attendance rates, and changes in percentages of students enrolled in gifted, advanced placement, and college preparatory courses). As a result, states have created standards for what is considered “proficient” in math, reading, and science, drawing criticism because some states have created artificially low standards so that schools will not lose funding (Duncan, 2012).

Although the law has its flaws, holding schools accountable for student learning has resulted in some benefits for students. For instance, schools have focused attention and resources on meeting AYP, and many evidence-based cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioral strategies have been introduced in classrooms to enhance academic achievement (Lee & Shute, 2010). Additionally, NCLB authorized grant monies to be awarded to select dropout prevention programs that provided counseling and mentoring for at-risk students, character education programs, programs promoting the physical well-being of students, and early childhood programs designed to enhance at-risk children’s emotional, behavioral, and social development (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

It is noteworthy that NCLB included provisions for the non-cognitive aspects of learning, since research has shown that many factors influence how students perform on academic tests, including test anxiety, nutrition, sleep habits, positive and negative emotions, and engagement in school (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009). Educators have long since recognized that helping students learn and achieve success in school is only partly due to students’ cognitive understanding of concepts and demonstration of skills on standardized tests (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). A recent meta-analysis shows that students’ academic outcomes are also

impacted by their social and emotional experiences at school (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). To this end, many scientifically-based programs have been developed to improve student learning by making positive changes in the psychosocial environment of schools (see Schaps, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013, for reviews). However, Greenberg and colleagues (2003) point out that even though evidence-based programs exist, many schools do not use them.

This could be due in part to the fact that NCLB only holds schools accountable for making AYP. Since the law requires that schools report their academic outcomes, but not “non-cognitive” factors related to learning, most schools have directed their efforts at improving students’ academic performance over students’ social and emotional learning (Greenberg, et al., 2003). At the same time, the increased pressure to perform well on multiple high-stakes tests every year has also resulted in higher levels of stress among teachers and students, which often runs counter to creating optimal learning experiences for students. Indeed, Gordon (2006) argues that the increased focus on “teaching to the test” has reduced students’ success in school to their ability to perform on standardized tests, neglecting the education of the whole child.

In the climate of accountability in today’s schools, educators are often relying on data regarding students’ academic performance to inform their decision-making and instructional practice, but not necessarily data about their emotional and social health. In an effort to help remedy this situation, Greenberg and colleagues (2003) assert that “it is essential that brief, reliable, and valid measures of the social and emotional health of students and of school environments be developed that can create both public accountability and guidance to improve the social and emotional health of children and youth” (p. 471). Subsequently, efforts to assess the non-cognitive aspects of student learning that can be leveraged to improve student outcomes

have been undertaken in recent years, including the development of the GSP (Lopez, et al., 2010). The following sections describe the GSP and research related to the constructs it measures: hope, engagement, and well-being.

The Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Organization created the GSP (see Appendix B), an annual national survey of students in grades 5 through 12 consisting of 20 items that tap students' hope, engagement at school, and well-being (Gallup, 2009b). The GSP has three subscales: the Hope Index, the Engagement Index, and the Well-being Index, each of which demonstrates adequate validity and reliability (Lopez, et al., 2010). The measure is described in detail in the Method chapter; therefore, the discussion in this chapter is limited to reviewing the literature related to the constructs measured by the GSP.

Lopez and Calderon (2011) reported that “Gallup researchers chose three variables (hope, engagement, and well-being) as the target of the Gallup Student Poll because they met the following four criteria: (1) they can be reliably measured, (2) they have a meaningful relationship with or impact on educational outcomes, (3) they are malleable and can be enhanced through deliberate action, and (4) they are not measured directly by another large-scale survey or testing program” (p. 118). The next section summarizes the research on the measurement, relations with academic outcomes, and interventions related to hope, engagement, and well-being.

Hope

Hope theory. Researchers have studied hope for over 30 years (see Snyder, 2002; Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003, for reviews). Although several conceptualizations and theories of hope exist (e.g., Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990; Breznitz,

1986; Erikson, 1964; Gottschalk, 1974; Staats, 1989; Stotland, 1969; in Synder & Lopez, 2005, p. 201-203), cognitive Hope Theory (Snyder, et al., 1991; Snyder, 1994; 2002) is the model operationalized in the GSP and used in this study. Snyder et al. (1997) defined hope as “a cognitive set involving the beliefs in one’s capabilities to produce workable routes to goals (the pathways component), as well as the self-related beliefs about initiating and sustaining movement toward these goals (the agency component)” (p. 401). Along the way to goal pursuit, a person may encounter a stressor that could potentially block the intended route. This is where pathways thinking (developing alternate routes that circumvent the obstacle) becomes apparent. If a person is able to successfully navigate around an impediment and continue his or her goal-directed behavior, then positive emotions result. If, on the other hand, a person either lacks the agency (desire to move forward and pursue the goal) or the person cannot determine pathways (alternate routes to the goal), then the process of achieving a goal is stymied (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2005). Simply put, hope is a person’s ability to use multiple strategies to circumvent obstacles and sustain movement toward a specific, future-oriented goal.

The GSP operationalizes hope as “the ideas and energy for the future” (Lopez, 2009; Lopez, et al., 2010). High hope students are described as “hopeful” and “possess numerous ideas and abundant energy for the future,” whereas low hope students are labeled “discouraged” and they “lack the ideas and energy for the future.” The remaining students are categorized as “stuck: generating little momentum toward the future” (Gallup, 2010a, p. 10).

Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) criticized Snyder’s hope theory for not adequately distinguishing hope from related constructs (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem). In response, Snyder et al. (2005) argued that hope is theoretically distinct from optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. For example, in Seligman’s theory of learned optimism (1991),

individuals minimize the psychological effect of negative outcomes by attributing their cause to something outside of their control, (e.g., “Other people caused this to happen,” “This probably will not happen again”), which leads them to feel optimistic about the future. In Hope Theory, however, the emphasis is on reaching positive goal-directed outcomes instead of distancing oneself from negative outcomes (Snyder, et al., 2005). Similarly, Scheier and Carver’s theory of optimism (1985) contends that a person’s movement toward a goal reflects a tendency to believe that more good things will happen than bad. This model of optimism implies that an individual possesses agency, or belief in their ability to pursue their goals, whereas hope theory gives equal emphasis to pathways *and* agency thinking (Snyder, et al., 2005).

In addition to the theoretical arguments made by Snyder and colleagues that distinguish hope from optimism, researchers have found that hope accounts for significantly more variance over and above optimism in terms of problem-focused coping and mental health symptoms (Snyder, et al., 1991), well-being (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999), and academic performance of law students (Rand, Martin, & Shea, 2011). Studies using structural equation modeling and meta-analysis methods have confirmed that hope and optimism are distinct, yet related constructs (Alarcon, Bowling, & Khazon, 2013; Bryant & Cvengros, 2004; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009).

There are also distinctions between hope theory and the theory of self-efficacy, or the belief in one’s ability to accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1982). While both emphasize goals, hope theory allows for enduring, situational and cross-situational goals (Snyder, et al., 2005), unlike Bandura’s contention that self-efficacy is restricted to situational goals (1982). Additionally, agency thoughts are recognized in self-efficacy theory as the last step before pursuing goal-oriented action, while hope theory emphasizes agency *and* pathways thinking *prior to and during* goal pursuit (Snyder, et al., 2005). Emotions are also thought to be the result of goal-directed

thoughts in hope theory, yet they are not addressed by self-efficacy theory (Snyder, et al., 2005). In their correlational study of 204 undergraduate students, Magaletta and Oliver (1999) found that hope and self-efficacy, while correlated ($.59, p < .001$), are distinct constructs that contribute uniquely to well-being. Multiple regression analysis in that study revealed that self-efficacy accounted for 40% of the variance in well-being, and hope contributed a small, but unique amount of variance (3%) over and above self-efficacy. While there are conceptual parallels between the agency component of hope and self-efficacy, agency contributed an additional 10% of the variance in well-being over self-efficacy.

Self-esteem models also seem closely related to hope, since both are focused on goal-directed thoughts. Self-esteem theory posits that people judge their own worth and that this judgment is often based on successful (high self-esteem) or unsuccessful (low-self esteem) pursuit of goals. While self-esteem and hope do correlate in the .45 range (Snyder, et al., 1991), other correlational studies that examined the relationship between the constructs have found that hope has several positive results over and above those predicted by self-esteem (self-worth). Specifically, hope predicted 56% of the variance in the athletic performance of nine female track athletes and significantly predicted semester GPA in a sample of 370 undergraduate student athletes, whereas self-esteem was not a significant predictor (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997). In a correlational study with a sample of 372 children ages 9 to 14, hope predicted academic performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills over and above self-worth, $\Delta R^2 = .22, p < .001$ (Snyder, et al., 1997). Ciarrochi, Heaven, and Davies (2007) examined the effect of hope, self-esteem, and positive attributional style on school grades, overall adjustment, and emotional well-being over a one-year period of time in a sample of 635 Australian middle school students. The study relied on multiple sources of data including self-report and observations. Results

indicated that hope reliably predicted student grades after controlling for gender, verbal ability, and numerical ability, $\beta = .100$, $SE \beta = .028$, $t = 3.57$, $p < .001$; self-esteem, but not hope, negatively predicted sadness, $\beta = -.133$, $SE \beta = .047$, $t = -2.83$, $p < .01$; and increases in both hope and self-esteem were related to increased positive affect ($\beta = .153$, $SE \beta = .047$, $t = 3.26$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = .124$, $SE \beta = .045$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .01$, respectively). Cross-sectional data collected at Time 2 indicated that positive attributional style alone was associated with decreased fear and hostility ($\beta = -.087$, $SE \beta = .045$, $t = -1.93$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = -.120$, $SE \beta = .046$, $t = -2.61$, $p < .01$, respectively), and only hope was negatively related to teacher ratings of behavioral problems, $\beta = -.110$, $SE \beta = .046$, $t = -2.39$, $p < .01$. Self-esteem, but not hope, was negatively related to teacher ratings of emotional problems, $\beta = -.112$, $SE \beta = .045$, $t = -2.49$, $p < .01$. Researchers concluded that the data confirmed that hope is distinct from self-esteem and attributional style (Ciarrochi, et al., 2007). Taken together, theory and empirical evidence demonstrate that although hope shares similarities with optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, the constructs are distinct.

Assessing hope. Three scales have been developed to measure hope: the Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1991), the State Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996), and the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1997). The Dispositional Hope Scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (mean $\alpha = .82$; $SD = .05$) and test-retest reliability (mean $r = .80$, $SD = .05$, $p < .01$; Babyak, Snyder, & Yoshinobu, 1993; Hellman, Pittman, & Munoz, 2013; Snyder, et al., 1991). The State Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1996) had Cronbach's alphas ranging from .81 to .95, with test-retest correlations ranging from .44 to .65, $p < .001$. The Children's Hope Scale has also been confirmed as a reliable measure of hope in children and adolescents, with alphas ranging from .72 to .86 and test-retest correlations ranging from .71 to .73, $p < .001$ (Snyder, et

al., 1997; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004, 2006). The Gallup Student Poll (Lopez, et al., 2010) also measures hope, in addition to engagement and well-being. The Hope Index of the GSP has strong psychometric properties (Cronbach's alphas range from .65 to .78) and accounts for approximately 48% of the variance in the overall GSP scale (Lopez, et al., 2010). The items that measure hope on the GSP are:

Q2: I know I will graduate from high school.

Q3: There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.

Q4: I can think of many ways to get good grades.

Q5: I energetically pursue my goals.

Q6: I can find lots of ways around any problem.

Q7: I know I will find a good job after I graduate.

The GSP will be discussed in greater detail in the Method chapter. Since the developers of the GSP chose to include hope, in part, because it has a significant relationship with academic outcomes (Lopez, et al., 2010), the next section reviews the research related to hope, with specific focus on hope's relation to academic outcomes.

Hope research. The hope literature indicates that people with greater hope cope with pain better, use more resources and problem-solving strategies, have better psychological adjustment, and less depression and stress than people with less hope (Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy, & Fortunato, 2007; Chang, 1998; Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Snyder, 2002; Snyder, et al., 1991; Snyder, et al., 2003). Hope also predicts athletic performance and success in college track athletes, with trait and state hope together accounting for 56% of the variance in sport performance (Curry, et al., 1997). Additionally, hope has consistently correlated with life satisfaction (Chang, 1998; Gilman, et al., 2006; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011; Merkaš

& Brajša-Žganec, 2011; Valle, et al., 2004, 2006; You et al., 2008) and engagement (Van Ryzin, 2011) in adolescents and adults. According to the GSP results in 2009, hope is significantly correlated to students having a relationship with an adult who cares about their future (Lopez, 2009).

In terms of academic outcomes, multiple correlation studies have indicated that adolescents and college students with greater hope have better academic problem-solving skills, higher GPAs, and better academic outcomes than their lower hope counterparts, even when controlling for intelligence, previous grades, self-esteem, and entrance examination scores (Chang, 1998; Ciarrochi, et al., 2007; Curry, et al., 1997; Gilman, et al., 2006; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, et al., 2011; Seirup & Rose, 2011). Indeed, Lopez, Reichard, Marques, and Dollwet (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 45 primary studies ($N = 9,250$) of the relation between hope and academic outcomes and found that hope has a medium, positive correlation with academic outcomes in students ($r = .23$), with higher hope students having a 12% gain in academic outcomes than lower hope students. Students in elementary, middle, and high school had stronger correlations than college students, although both were significant ($p < .05$).

Hope also predicts student academic outcomes over time. In Ciarrohi, Heaven, and Davies' (2007) longitudinal study of 635 seventh grade students by described earlier, researchers found that hope at Time 1 predicted total grades at Time 2 after controlling for gender, verbal, and numerical ability ($\beta = .100$, $SE \beta = .028$, $t = 3.57$, $p < .001$). Another longitudinal study with 202 Portuguese students ranging in age from 12 to 16 years old found that hope predicted 14% of the variance in academic achievement as measured by total grades at Time 1, and contributed additional unique variance at Time 2 (12%) and again at Time 3 (11%), controlling for previous hope levels ($p < .01$) (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, et al., 2011, p. 10).

Other factors, such as participation in school, life satisfaction, and psychological adjustment, also contribute to academic success. In one study of 341 seventh through twelfth grade students from two school districts, Gilman, Dooley, and Florell (2006) examined the relations between hope, global life satisfaction, psychological adjustment, participation in structured extracurricular activities (SEAs), and reported grade point averages (GPAs). Results indicated that the measure's agency and pathways subscales were positively correlated to global life satisfaction ($r = .62$ and $.56$, respectively) personal adjustment ($r = .54$ and $.51$), GPA ($r = .42$ and $.24$) and SEAs ($r = .19$ and $.15$), and negatively correlated to markers of school maladjustment ($r = -.35$ and $-.20$) and psychological stress ($r = -.36$ and $-.34$). A hierarchical cluster analysis revealed significant differences in hope agency and pathways scores among three groups ($p < .001$). Researchers labeled the highest scoring group "high hope," the lowest scoring group "low hope," and the group in which scores were neither high or low "average hope." Results indicated that high and average hope students had significantly less psychological and school distress ($F = 17.10$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .12$; $F = 9.85$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .07$, respectively), were better adjusted personally ($F = 70.23$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .35$), and had higher life satisfaction ($F = 59.56$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .32$) than low hope students. In addition, average and high hope students participated in more extracurricular activities ($F = 5.32$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .05$) and had better GPAs ($F = 16.82$, $df = 2,263$, $ES = .11$) than low hope students ($p < .005$).

Gallup research also supports the relation between hope and indicators of academic success (GPA, attendance, credits earned, and graduation rate). In a pilot study in 2008, 198 ninth grade students from a Midwestern high school completed the GSP and provided attendance, credits earned, and GPA data (Lopez, et al., 2010). The results confirmed the factor structure, reliability, and predictive validity of the GSP. Hope significantly predicted attendance

($r = .29$), credits earned during the first semester of ninth grade ($r = .30$), and total GPA at winter break ($r = .23$), $p < .05$. In a separate study of 213 Midwestern students, high hope students had a graduation rate of 56.5%, while low hope students had a graduation rate of only 40.3% (Calderon, 2012). Additionally, Gallup explored the impact of contextual factors on hope, and found that the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch programs in a school does not impact hope as measured by the GSP. However, large class sizes are negatively associated with hope; that is, the larger the class size, the lower the hope in students (Gallup, 2009c).

Hope also is related to the manner in which students approach their academics. Research indicates that hopeful students approach academic problem solving differently than less hopeful students and tend to have better grades. For example, Chang (1998) divided 211 college students into high hope and low hope groups based on a median split of their scores on the Dispositional Hope Scale and found that high hope students approached academic problem-solving from a more positive orientation ($M = 13.15$, $SD = 3.17$, $t(1,209) = 5.90$, $p < .0001$) and rational perspective ($M = 49.59$, $SD = 13.34$, $t(1,209) = 4.23$, $p < .0002$) with less avoidance ($M = 9.12$, $SD = 6.36$, $t(1,209) = -4.67$, $p < .0001$) than their low-hope counterparts ($M = 10.19$, $SD = 3.38$, $t(1,209) = 5.90$, $p < .0001$; $M = 41.55$, $SD = 10.82$, $t(1,209) = 4.23$, $p < .0002$; and $M = 13.51$, $SD = 5.74$, $t(1,209) = -4.67$, $p < .0001$, respectively).

The literature supports the link between hope and academics. However, most studies are correlational, and there are relatively few experimental studies of hope enhancing interventions, particularly with adolescents. Theoretical and empirically-based hope boosting strategies for children and adolescents are described in the next section.

Interventions boosting hope. Researchers have created theoretical guidelines for intervening to increase levels of hope in students. Snyder and colleagues (2003) suggested

helping students to set meaningful and pleasurable goals, and then prioritizing goals. They emphasize setting approach goals (e.g., moving toward something) rather than avoidance goals (e.g., preventing something from happening), which is consistent with Elliot and McGregor's (2001) achievement goal framework. Snyder and colleagues (2003) noted that high hope students also seem to be interested in other people's goals, so they suggest having students set group goals in addition to personal goals. Other recommended practices include teaching students how to set clear markers for such goals so they can track their progress, and then celebrating the progress toward and achievement of the goal (Lopez, 2010; Snyder, et al., 2003).

To increase pathways thinking, hope researchers recommend helping students break goals into smaller sub-goals, and teaching multiple ways to get to the goal. Additionally, students should attribute blocked pathways to external, rather than internal processes (e.g., "the path does not work," instead of "I do not have enough talent") to raise their hope (Snyder, et al., 2003). Lopez (2010) called for schools to eliminate physical or psychological barriers, such as schedule problems, difficulties with the physical layout of the building, or lack of resources.

To promote agency, adults can help students set "stretch" goals that promote a sense of challenge based on their previous performances. Also, having students keep a diary of self-talk can help them identify whether their internal dialogues are positive or negative. If students have negative self-talk, teaching them how to dispute it and replace it with more positive, productive self-talk can increase agency thinking (Snyder, et al., 2003). Telling students stories that portray how others have overcome adversity can provide models for building hope, and involving children in teamwork activities that are exciting may also raise their hope levels (Lopez, 2010).

Teachers are also thought to have profound influence on student hope. Lopez (2010) asserted that hopeful principals and teachers create hope in others by "encouraging autonomy,

modeling a hopeful lifestyle, promoting strengths-based development, and telling stories about how students and educators overcome big obstacles to realize important goals” (p. 42). He also suggested that creating excitement about the future and teaching multiple strategies for problem-solving are other ways educators can engender hope in students. In addition to modeling hope, Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, and Feldman (2003) posited that “school children build hope through learning to trust in the ordered predictability and consistency of their interactions with teachers. By being firm, fair, and consistent, teachers engender hope in their students” (p. 131). They recommended that teachers should be clear about their expectations and hold students to high standards and then help them learn to take risks by fostering an environment of trust that is absent ridicule and demeaning comments.

In addition to recommendations based on theory, several researchers have developed school hope intervention programs that have been shown to increase student levels of hope (Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009). Interventions include individually identifying and prioritizing goals, developing agency about goals, monitoring negative self-talk, and developing logical sub-goals to develop pathways thinking. Pedrotti, Edwards, and Lopez (2008) reviewed three hope-boosting interventions. Once a week for 8 weeks, students in first through sixth grades spent 30 minutes learning about hope theory and discussing stories about high-hope children (McDermott et al., 1997). Children’s hope was assessed pre- and post-intervention using the Children’s Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder, et al., 1997). The authors reported that the intervention resulted in modest gains in hope, although no statistical results were published.

A second study described by Petrotti and colleagues (2008) had an experimental-control design measuring hope using the CHS at pre-, post-, and 6 weeks post-intervention. The Making

Hope Happen intervention (Pedrotti, et al., 2001) was a five-week program with junior high students that involved explaining the hope model and applying it to their own lives. Each week, students met with graduate student researchers for 45 minutes and they were taught different ways to activate hope. In the first week, students were introduced to the hope concept by the researchers, then they set a positive goal they wanted to work on over the course of the intervention, and finally were paired with hope buddies (i.e., low hope students and high hope students). Hope buddy pairs discussed each session's content at the end of the session. In the second week, students were introduced to the acronym GPOWER (G = goals, P = pathways, O = obstacles, W = willpower, E = evaluate your process, and R = rethink and try again) and discussed it with their hope buddies. In the third week, they played a hope game, a board game that emphasized the additive properties of agency and pathways in the pursuit of a goal. In week four, they worked individually to rewrite negative statements as positive ones as an exercise in modifying negative self-talk to positive self-talk. They also rated statements by historical figures according to their level of hopefulness. At the end of the fourth session, they started to write personal hope stories of how they have worked to achieve the goal they set in week one. In the fifth and final session, students shared their hope stories with each other. At the end of the intervention, the researchers reported the results indicated students in the experimental group had significantly larger increases in hope than the control group and the results were maintained at a 6-week follow-up, although no statistics were published.

The Making Hope Happen model was also adapted for use with fourth grade students (Making Hope Happen for Kids; Edwards & Lopez, 2000). The study was conducted two different times with an unspecified number of fourth graders in two different schools. In this modified intervention, students first acted out the parts of the hope model using laminated props

and created a brief psychodrama to explain goal pursuits. During the second week, researchers read the students a story about a young girl's hope pursuit. In the third week, students played a hope game designed by the researchers, and throughout the fourth week students created hope cartoons. The students shared their hope stories with each other in the final week. Pedrotti et al (2008) reported that the study did not have a control group, but instead relied on pre- and post-intervention results from the CHS. The authors did not report a sample size or statistics in the publication; however they indicated that the students had significant gains in hope at the conclusion of the intervention.

As a follow-up study, *Making Hope Happen in High School*, was conducted with an unspecified number of groups, each consisting of over 20 inner-city ninth grade students (Bouwkamp & Lopez, 2001). The intervention was similar to the original *Making Hope Happen* intervention, but students met with two facilitators for five weekly 70-minute sessions. In week 1, students learned about hope theory through posters and stories with high-hope adolescent protagonists. Then they were given disposable cameras to use for a "Hope Camera Project," in which groups of 10 students were told to photograph things that represented hope and create a hope project. During the second, third, and fourth weeks, students continued to learn about hope through hope stories and activities engaging students in thinking about how to apply hope to their lives. Students also developed individual hope stories during this time. The last session involved students sharing their camera projects and discussing their future goals. The experiment did not use a control group but did assess students' hope pre- and post-intervention using the CHS. Pedrotti and colleagues (2008) did not report statistical results, but they indicated that low-hope students achieved significant gains in hope following the intervention.

More recently, Marques, Lopez, and Pais-Ribiero (2011) conducted an experimental-control study of a five-week hope intervention with 62 Portuguese sixth grade middle school students. Participants in both groups completed pre-, post-, 6-, and 18-month follow-up measures of hope, life-satisfaction, and self-worth. At the beginning of the study, researchers met with teachers and parents/guardians of the students in the intervention group for a one-hour session and taught the adults how to (a) conceptualize clear goals, (b) produce numerous ranges of pathways to attainment, (c) summon the mental energy to maintain goals pursuit, and (d) reframe seemingly insurmountable obstacles as challenges to be overcome. The parent and teacher manual taught about hope theory, hope finding and hope bonding, as well as strategies for hope enhancement and hope reminding.

Students in the intervention group met once a week for five 60-minute sessions. Session 1: “Learning about Hope,” taught students about hope theory, the associated vocabulary, and asked students to act out the hope model. Session 2: “Structuring Hope,” taught students how to recognize goals, pathways, agency, and obstacles, and then asked students to identify personal goals. In Session 3: “Creating Positive and Specific Goals,” students practiced the hope model and made goals more specific and positive. Students identified and created “hopeful talk,” reviewed personal goals, and connected with a Hope Buddy during Session 4: “Practice Makes Perfect.” Finally, in Session 5: “Review and Apply for the Future,” students reviewed and shared their personal hope stories.

Results indicated a significant interaction between group and time on the CHS, $F(3,120) = 3.00, p = .03$, partial eta squared = .07. The intervention group had a significant increase in hope between Time 1 and Time 2, $t(60) = -4.29, p < .001$, (two-tailed), Time 1 and Time 3, $t(52) = -4.03, p = .001$ (two-tailed), and Time 1 and Time 4, $t(49) = -3.38, p = .003$ (two-tailed). In

contrast, the comparison group's hope levels did not significantly change over time. This is the only study promoting hope with the collaboration of key stakeholders (i.e., parents and teachers), and as such, Marques, Lopez, and Pais-Ribiero (2011) recommend that “comprehensive efforts at modifying children's hope and related behavior should not only include direct work with students, but also include efforts to modify environments” (p. 141).

Summary of hope literature. Hope consists of a person's “ideas and energy for the future” (Lopez, et al., 2010). Although some researchers have criticized hope theory, claiming it is too closely related to other well-researched constructs, several meta-analyses have demonstrated that hope is distinct from other similar concepts such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Multiple correlational studies have suggested that high hope students have better academic performance, greater involvement in extracurricular activities, and better physical and mental health than their low-hope counterparts. Research also indicates that hope is malleable, and several intervention programs designed to boost hope levels in school-age populations have been tested with success. However, there are gaps between the existing research and real-world applications of hope theory in schools. For example, trained hope researchers delivered the manualized interventions in the majority of the experimental studies, conditions that are not typical in the day-to-day operations of most schools. To date, no schools using the GSP have been studied at a qualitative level to determine whether their daily practices reflect the suggestions in the literature for boosting hope, which provides a basis for conducting the current study.

Engagement

The literature on student engagement spans three decades and began as an offshoot of research on school dropout prevention (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Since its

beginnings, researchers in different fields (e.g., psychology, education) have developed multiple definitions as well as theories about the processes involved in engagement. This section explores the various definitions of engagement as applied to research in schools and then summarizes three prominent theories of engagement. A discussion of the research findings related to student engagement follows; the section concludes with a review of several engagement interventions.

Defining engagement. As a construct, engagement is not well defined but instead is interpreted broadly by different researchers depending on their specialty. Some researchers use terms like “student engagement,” “school engagement,” or simply “engagement” interchangeably, while others enumerate the distinctions between the terms. For instance, Marks defined engagement as “a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning” (2000, pp. 154-155). Another researcher defined school engagement as the “student’s relationship with the school community: the people (adults and peers), the structures (rules, facilities, schedules), the curriculum and content, the pedagogy, and the opportunities (curricular, co-curricular, and extra curricular)” (Ett, 2008, p. 26). Other researchers have defined student engagement as “the student’s active participation in academic and co-curricular or school-related activities, and commitment to educational goals and learning. Engaged students find learning meaningful, and are invested in their learning and future. It is a multidimensional construct that consists of behavioral (including academic), cognitive, and affective subtypes. Student engagement drives learning; requires energy and effort; is affected by multiple contextual influences; and can be achieved for all learners” (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012, pp. 816-817). Furlong and Christenson (2008) posited that student engagement is made up of a four-part typology: (a) academic, (b) behavioral, (c) cognitive, and (d) affective. Academic engagement refers to the amount of time spent on school

work, the number of credits earned, and the amount of completed homework. Behavioral engagement includes attendance, active participation in class, and/or involvement in extracurricular activities. Cognitive engagement, or how relevant a student perceives their learning is to future goals, is observed as interest in learning, goal setting, and self-regulation. Affective engagement refers to “a sense of belonging and connection to and support by parents, teachers, and peers” (p. 366).

In light of the range of conceptions of engagement in the literature, several researchers have called for a common definition of engagement as a multidimensional construct (Appleton, et al., 2008; Eccles & Wang, 2012; Fredricks, et al., 2004). But, although a common definition has yet to emerge, most researchers in the field agree that engagement is multidimensional and taps a student’s feelings (e.g., affective reactions to in the classroom, interest, values, emotions), thoughts (e.g., investment in school, motivation, effort, and strategy use), and behaviors (e.g., participation in school, doing work, following rules) related to school (Appleton, et al., 2008; Fredricks, et al., 2004; Griffiths, et al., 2009). Engagement is viewed as variable in intensity and duration, and it is thought to be malleable (Fredricks, et al., 2004).

The GSP operationalizes engagement as “involvement in and enthusiasm for school.” According to Gallup’s score continuum, “engaged” students are “highly involved with and enthusiastic about school,” whereas their “actively disengaged” counterparts “undermine the educational process for self and others.” Those students who are neither engaged nor disruptive are simply categorized as “not engaged” and described as “present but not involved with or enthusiastic about school” (Gallup, 2010a, p. 11).

Theories of engagement. Eccles and Wang (2012) have pointed out that over the past 30 years, two separate but parallel lines of engagement research have evolved: (a) engagement

theory linked to dropout prevention and at-risk populations and (b) psychological motivation theory related to academic motivation in the classroom. For example, in response to educators' and policy makers' concern about a rising dropout rate among at-risk students, Finn (1989) proposed the participation-identification model of engagement, which asserts that participation in school is essential for students to identify with school, and when students participate in and feel a sense of belonging with school, the result is student engagement. Finn developed a four-level taxonomy to participation. Level 1 relates to attending to and responding to directions or questions initiated by the teacher. Level 2 includes level one characteristics and adds initiative-taking behavior. Level 3 includes participation in social, extracurricular, and athletic aspects of school life. And Level 4 includes participation in the governance of the school, such as academic goal-setting and decision-making and a role in regulating the school's disciplinary system. In essence, Finn proposed that student engagement involves a sense of belonging with school and participation in school activities (Marks, 2000).

A second prominent theory, Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), conceptualizes engagement in terms of psychological motivation. Ryan and Deci assert that engagement or self-determination is a result of fulfilled basic, universal psychological needs, namely (a) competence, (b) relatedness, and (c) autonomy. In other words, self-determined individuals are engaged because they feel competent, connected to others, and autonomous. Ryan and Deci have argued that "failing to provide supports for competence, autonomy, and relatedness . . . contribute[s] to alienation and ill-being" (p. 74).

SDT hinges on the concept of intrinsic motivation, which Ryan and Deci defined as "the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn" (p. 70). SDT seeks to explain which conditions elicit and maintain

intrinsic motivation. The theory suggests that people are only motivated intrinsically to things that interest them. Importantly, social-contextual events (e.g., communication, rewards, feedback) that reinforce competence can facilitate intrinsic motivation. However, feelings of competence (i.e., self-efficacy) must be accompanied by autonomy (an internal locus of causality) for intrinsic motivation to manifest. Expected external rewards reduce intrinsic motivation, and so do threats, deadlines, directives, pressured evaluations, and imposed goals. On the other hand, SDT posits that choice, acknowledgement of feelings, and opportunities for self-direction enhance intrinsic motivation because people feel more autonomous. According to the theory, a sense of security and relatedness impacts intrinsic motivation, therefore secure relationships are needed to express intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) contended that extrinsic motivation, or “the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome” (p. 71) is equally important for SDT. People can become more self-determined, and thereby more engaged, by integrating extrinsically motivated activities into their daily lives.

Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that competence, relatedness, and autonomy are essential for well-being. They assert that social contexts need to respond to basic psychological needs and provide appropriate developmental supports to attain self-determination. Additionally, excessive control, non-optimal challenges, and lack of connectedness result in lack of initiative and responsibility as well as distress and psychopathology.

In reviewing longitudinal studies and large scale assessments, Lee and Schute (2010) described student engagement as having behavioral, cognitive, and emotional components that impact academic performance. Similar to motivation, it involves cognitive processes that develop a goal orientation, but engagement also highlights the behavioral and affective components of student learning. Factors influencing engagement at school include social context

(e.g., positive relationships with teachers, parents, and peers), self-related constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, self-discipline, outcome expectations), and previous academic achievement.

Ultimately, in Lee and Schute's (2010) personal and social-contextual factors framework, it is the *interaction* of personal (i.e., student engagement and learning strategy use) and social-contextual (i.e., school climate and social-familial) variables that ultimately make the difference in student academic achievement.

Measuring engagement. Several researchers point out that the engagement literature incorporates a wide variety of constructs in defining engagement and often duplicates concepts from previous closely related areas, such as motivation and goal theory (Christenson, et al., 2012; Fredricks, et al., 2004). Additionally, the scales used to measure engagement often combine items into general scales that blur the distinction between types of engagement and do not indicate the source of the engagement (e.g., social or academic aspects of school) nor tap qualitative differences in the level of engagement (Fredricks, et al., 2004).

Indeed, few scales have been developed specifically to tap student engagement. One is the Student Engagement Instrument (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006) that measures cognitive and affective engagement. It is comprised of six factors, each with adequate internal reliability: Factor 1 (Teacher-Student Relationships, $\alpha = .88$), Factor 2 (Control and Relevance of School Work, $\alpha = .80$), Factor 3 (Peer Support for Learning, $\alpha = .82$), Factor 4 (Future Aspirations and Goals, $\alpha = .78$), Factor 5 (Family Support for Learning, $\alpha = .76$), and Factor 6 (Extrinsic Motivation, $\alpha = .72$). Betts, Appleton, Reschly, Christenson, and Huebner (2010) confirmed the factor structure and reliability of the measure across middle and high school grade levels, and determined the test is appropriate for use with children and youth.

Another engagement scale is the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which is based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for post-secondary students (Kuh, 2003). The HSSE is a 35-item survey that taps cognitive/intellectual/academic engagement, social/behavioral/participatory engagement, and emotional engagement. The cognitive/intellectual/academic engagement dimension of the scale measures “the engagement of the mind” and has robust internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$); the social/behavioral/participatory dimension measures the “engagement in the life of the school” and has a Cronbach alpha of .76. The third dimension, emotional engagement, is described as the “engagement of the heart” and has a Cronbach alpha of .93 (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012).

The GSP (Lopez, et al., 2010) included an Engagement Index to measure student engagement, which is operationalized as “involvement and enthusiasm for school.” The Engagement Index of the GSP has adequate internal consistency with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .70 to .76, and it accounts for approximately 48% of the variance in the overall GSP scale (Lopez, et al., 2010). Many of the items on this subscale were derived from the Q¹² Employee Engagement Survey (Wagner & Harter, 2006; Lopez, et al., 2010). The items that measure engagement on the GSP are:

Q8: I have a best friend at school.

Q9: I feel safe in this school.

Q10: My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.

Q11: At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

Q12: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.

The next section reviews the research related to engagement and academic outcomes.

Engagement research. Research on student engagement began as an outgrowth of dropout prevention research in an effort to better understand the factors that facilitate positive academic outcomes and prevent students from leaving school prematurely (Appleton, et al., 2008). Early engagement research focused on clarifying the relation between engagement and academic achievement. For instance, in a study of a sample of 15,737 eighth grade students who participated in the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Finn (1993) examined data to understand the relationship between participation in school and academic achievement. Results of multivariate analysis indicated significant linear ($D = .75, p < .01$) and quadratic ($D = .09, p < .01$) trends, showing a strong, positive correlation between students' participation and scores on standardized achievement tests. In other words, students who attended school regularly, had good behavior (as rated by teachers), and participated in extracurricular activities had higher standardized test scores in reading, math, science, and history than students who did not participate. In addition, the findings indicated students who had higher levels of participation had greater academic benefits than those with lower participation levels. However, students' race, gender, and SES did not significantly impact the findings.

In a related study involving a subset of 5,945 at-risk NELS:88 eighth grade students, Finn (1993) investigated whether levels of participation in the classroom and/or emotional engagement explained variations in math and reading achievement test scores. The findings indicated a statistically significant difference in achievement scores between those students who participated and were emotionally engaged than disengaged students ($D = .45, p < .0001$). Thus, the more students were involved in and identified with school-related activities, the more successful they were academically.

More recent data from a Gallup study of 8,341 teachers and 78,106 students in grades 5 through 12 from 160 schools in 8 states revealed student engagement explained 58% of the variance in reading achievement test scores and 64% of the variance in math achievement test scores (Gordon, 2013). A different study using the GSP and academic achievement data for 148 schools found that engagement accounted for 46%, 37% and 34% of the variance in math, reading, and science achievement, respectively (Gordon, 2013). Sandoval (2013) examined the reading and math assessment and GSP data for 105 Title I schools (i.e., at least 40% of the student population is entitled to free and reduced lunch) in Texas. Findings from the study indicated engagement was significantly correlated with reading ($r = .31$) and math (.45) achievement scores at the $p < .01$ level.

Since the literature demonstrates that engagement is linked to academic achievement, researchers also investigated factors that predict engagement at the individual student and school levels. You and Sharkey (2009) tested a developmental-ecological model of student engagement in an effort to better understand the individual and contextual factors that contribute to student engagement over time. Using multilevel latent growth curve modeling with a sample of 13,825 students from 934 high schools surveyed at three time points (grades 8, 10, and 12), researchers found that 96% of the variance in change in student engagement was accounted for by individual level factors, whereas only 4% of the variance was due to school-level factors. Students' previous grades predicted engagement ($d = .36$), as well as psychological factors (locus of control, $d = .16$, and self-esteem, $d = .15$) and how much students' peers valued academic success ($d = .15$, all $ps < .05$). Parenting practices also contributed to student engagement ($d = .03$, $p < .05$). At the school-level, teacher support had the largest effect on student engagement over time ($d = 0.36$, $p < .0001$), whereas the school's mean SES and teacher's homework

policies had a small effect on student engagement growth over time ($d = .13$ and $.09$, respectively, $p < .01$).

Marks (2000) found similar results from her study of 3,669 fifth, eighth, and tenth grade students in from 143 social studies and mathematics students from 24 elementary, middle, and high schools (8 at each level). Using hierarchical linear modeling, results indicated that most of the variance in engagement occurred within classrooms (elementary = 83.8%, middle = 88.0%, high = 92%), and researchers concluded that individual student characteristics and experiences accounted for most of the variability in engagement. Researchers found girls were significantly more engaged than boys across all three levels ($r = .30, .25$, and $.28$, respectively, $p < .001$) and SES also contributed to student engagement at all three levels ($r = .16, .18, .13$, respectively, $p < .001$). However, race did not affect engagement. Previous school success (GPA) significantly influenced engagement at the high school ($r = .32$), elementary ($r = .28$) and middle school ($r = .23$) levels ($p < .001$). Alienation by peers reduced engagement the most at middle school ($r = -.32, p < .001$) followed by elementary and high school students ($r = -.21$ and $-.22$, respectively, $p < .001$).

At the school level, specifically in middle schools, personal background explained 7.8% of within school variance (gender and social class significant predictors, $r = .25$ and $.18$, respectively, $p < .00$). Orientation toward school (i.e., academic achievement and peer relationships) accounted for 24.4% of within-school variance. Authentic instructional work accounted for 22.1% of the variance within-schools. Social support accounted for 20% of the variance in engagement within-schools (school support $r = .19$, classroom support $r = .22$, parental involvement $r = .11, p < .001$). In this model, social support attenuated for effect of

prior school success, alienation, and authentic instructional work, but social class differences remained (Marks, 2000).

Finn and Voelkl (1993) investigated conditions in the school environment that may promote engagement in at-risk students. This study explored two aspects of school environment: structural (school size, student demographics) and regulatory (structure and rigidity of school procedures, severity of discipline). Using hierarchical linear modeling to analyze data from a sample of 6,488 eighth grade at-risk students from 758 schools, the researchers found that school-level variance in engagement was explained by teacher reports of students' absences or tardies (20.4%), teacher reports of disengaged behavior (30.7%), and student reports of absences (32.4%). The students perceived smaller schools more positively than larger schools, although only 6% of the between-school variance in student-teacher relationships was explained by school size.

The literature shows that school-level factors (e.g., voluntary choice, clear and consistent goals, small size, student participation in school policy and management, opportunities for staff and students to work together, project-based assignments, fairness and flexibility in school rules) are related to behavioral engagement, but there are not as many studies that provide evidence indicating a link between school-level factors and emotional and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, et al., 2004), which is likely due to the fact that indicators of academic and behavioral engagement are directly observable, while emotional and cognitive engagement are not. Even so, research indicates that the quality of student-teacher relationships does impact student engagement. One study of students from six elementary schools ($n=1846$) and three middle schools in one urban school district ($n = 2378$) used threshold analysis to determine that middle school students with teacher support were three times more likely to have high engagement and

74% less likely to feel disengaged (Klem & Connell, 2004). Conversely, middle school students who reported low teacher support were 68% more likely to be disengaged and 71% less likely to be engaged in school.

Klem and Connell (2004) pointed out that the engagement literature indicates students need to feel support from teachers in the form of involvement with the students, autonomy support, and a clear sense of structure. Studies also show students become more disengaged at school as they get older, despite the fact that research indicates engagement is one of the most robust predictors of student achievement and behavior in school. Based on their review of the literature, Klem and Connell contended that schools which had (a) high standards for academic learning and conduct, (b) meaningful and engaging pedagogy and curriculum, (c) professional learning communities among staff, and (d) personalized learning environments were more likely to have students who are engaged and connected to school. Lambert (2007) conducted a case study of an urban high school and identified (a) effective school leadership (a positive shift in teacher roles and attitudes), (b) effective instructional practices (coupling rigor with support, using data to guide decision making), (c) and a positive school culture (personal concern for students, opportunities for students to re-learn or re-submit assignments) as factors related to increased student engagement.

Other research confirms teacher support (i.e., academic or interpersonal) influences behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement and is also related to greater class participation, fewer behavioral disruptions, and a lower probability of dropping out among ethnically diverse samples of middle and high school students (for a review, see Fredricks, et al., 2004). Additionally, a combination of academic and social support in the classroom positively impacted student engagement more than either one alone (Fredricks, et al., 2004). Sharkey, You, and

Schnoebelen (2008) found educator's efforts to create positive relationships with their students were related to student engagement in a diverse sample. As such, the researchers asserted that "building relationships with youths is something teachers can do with confidence to increase the likelihood of student engagement for all children, regardless of family risk, gender, or ethnic background" (Sharkey, et al., 2008, p. 415).

Researchers used mixed-method or qualitative methodology to better understand the qualities of teachers who fostered positive relationships with students. For example, Garza (2009) identified attributes of a caring teacher as perceived by Latino and White high school students through a qualitative study. Five themes emerged from the data, indicating that caring teachers: (a) provide scaffolding during a teaching episode, (b) reflect a kind disposition through actions, (c) are always available to the student, (d) show a personal interest in the student's well-being inside and outside the classroom, and (e) provide affective academic support in the classroom setting. Ozer, Wolf, and Kong (2008) conducted a multi-method study of student belongingness with 32 high school students from urban schools and found that students respected teachers who had good teaching skills and were committed to student learning. In that study, students perceived caring as teachers who knew their names, listened to them and showed an interest in them, having high expectations while at the same time providing encouragement, and contact with teachers outside of the classroom or over time. They also found that being negatively "singled out" or having insufficient recognition of academic effort undermined students' sense of being cared about by teachers.

Engagement interventions. Even though there are a large number of studies that investigated the correlates and predictors of student engagement, few experimental studies of engagement interventions exist. Indeed, Lehr, Hanson, Sinclair, and Christenson (2003)

conducted an integrative review of studies of evidence-based interventions targeting disengaged learners, and found only 45 studies, some of which were related to the same intervention. The interventions varied from counseling services, reading remediation, tutoring, and attendance monitoring, to after-school clubs. Of the 45 studies included in the final review, none used random selection and assignment of participants to groups or manipulation of the independent variable. Eleven studies (24%) used nonrandom selection with random assignment to treatment or control groups, and 17 (38%) did not randomly assign comparison groups. Only four studies (10%) used pre-post designs for one group. One-third of the articles (13) described the interventions and generally described the results, but did not provide effect sizes. Although 98% of the interventions targeted student change in terms of attendance or behavior, only 50% of the publications reported significant results that supported the efficacy of the intervention.

One of the interventions that was studied multiple times and produced significant results was the Check & Connect program (Lehr, et al., 2003). The intervention involved paid adult mentors (a) checking on students' attendance, behavior referrals, and academic progress through systematic assessment and (b) connecting with students, families, and school staff. A mentor typically met with 40-48 elementary school students individually once a week at school for at least two years and facilitated relationships between students, families, and the school.

Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) found empirical support for the Check & Connect program in improving engagement in a sample of 80 elementary school students who received the treatment intervention for an average of 27 months. Results indicated that after accounting for baseline attendance and risk factors, students in the intervention were 3.72 times more likely to improve in school attendance for every unit of increase on a student survey of the quality of their relationship with their mentor. The mentor's rating of the closeness and quality

of their relationship with students also significantly predicted 23.9% of the variance ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) in teacher ratings of academic engagement. These findings provide support for the premise that building quality relationships with an adult mentor can improve engagement in elementary students.

The Check & Connect intervention also has been implemented with middle school students and at-risk high school students (Anderson, et al., 2004). Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, and Hurley (1998) investigated the efficacy of the intervention with a sample of 94 seventh and eighth grade students who were diagnosed with learning or emotional/behavior disorders and had been in the program. The researchers randomly divided students in grade 9 into treatment and control groups, and the post-test results showed that students participated significantly ($p < .05$) more in school and performed better on academic indicators than the control group. Sinclair, Christenson, and Thurlow (2005) conducted second longitudinal, experimental-control study of 144 ninth grade students (69% had been diagnosed with emotional or behavioral disabilities) examined the effect of the Check & Connect program over 4 or 5 years. Fewer students in the treatment group dropped out of school than the control group, and the treatment group also had better attendance and participated more in the IEP process (ES ranged from 0.26 to 0.58, $p < .01$).

In addition to engagement interventions delivered within the school day, Holloway (2002) reviewed the literature and asserted that structured extracurricular activities engaged students because they appealed to student interests and connected students to school, encouraged peer interactions that promoted cooperation, provided structure and challenge, and promoted student-adult relationships. Other researchers investigated whether structured extracurricular activities affected students' motivation, self-efficacy, and performance. Using a randomly

assigned, experimental-control design, Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, and Valsiner (2007) tested the effects of a 15-week after-school science program in a sample of 90 seventh grade middle school students from an urban, low SES school. The intervention, called the Investigator's Club, was based on SDT, and all of the activities were designed to facilitate students' experiences of autonomy support, competence, and relatedness. The lessons focused on a scientific principal (e.g., air pressure, sinking and floating) that was not covered by the science class curriculum. Each session began with a question about an observed phenomenon and then students were asked to predict what would happen when the experiment was run and to explain their reasoning. After the discussion, students collaborated in small groups to "work with materials to address some issue pertaining to the topic at hand" (p. 335) and then shared their results with the larger group. Finally, the students completed the experiment and discussed the results. Throughout the 15 weeks, students in the control group met a total of three times during school hours and watched the research staff demonstrate an experiment.

Findings from the study indicated that students who participated in the club had significantly less external motivation ($F(1,50) = 5.96, p < .01$) and more autonomous motivation ($F(1,50) = 4.29, p < .05$) than students in the control group. Additionally, students in the club group had fewer performance goals upon completion of the intervention than the control group ($F(1,50) = 4.89, p < .05$). Students in the treatment group also remained stable in their school engagement, compared to control students whose engagement significantly decreased over the course of the intervention ($F(1,50) = 8.77, p < .01$). Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that rather than enhance student engagement, the after-school program buffered against decreased engagement (Grolnick, et al., 2007).

Summary of the engagement literature. The diffuse nature of the research on engagement has resulted in numerous cross-sectional studies investigating the factors that are correlated with the multidimensional construct, but far fewer experimental or qualitative studies (Fredricks, et al., 2004; Lehr, et al., 2003). The research shows that engagement is linked to academic outcomes, and it suggests that the majority of the variance in engagement is accounted for by personal student characteristics (e.g., motivation, locus of control, gender, and SES), rather than school-level factors. Therefore, many researchers have focused on identifying those individual characteristics that are potential risk factors for disengagement that ultimately leads to dropout. Though school variables explain a significant, albeit smaller, amount of the variance in student engagement, fewer studies have explored the contextual and systemic factors that are most likely to influence engagement (Finn, 1993). As a result, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) have called for more qualitative research to be conducted to better understand the phenomenology of engagement. Thus, this exploratory, qualitative study may add to the existing engagement literature by investigating the contextual and systemic factors that are related to engagement in a real-world setting.

Well-Being

The well-being literature has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, although scientific study of the construct began in the late-20th century. Because the well-being literature spans multiple decades, the review of the well-being literature in this chapter is limited to studies that are related to well-being and academic outcomes, particularly in children and adolescents. This section reviews two central theories of well-being and definitions of the construct. A discussion of the research related to well-being in schools follows, and the section concludes with a review of well-being interventions.

Theories and definitions of well-being. Since the age of the Greek philosophers, what constitutes well-being has been the subject of much debate. Aristotle made an early distinction between two types of well-being: hedonic and eudaimonic (see Ryan & Deci, 2001, for a review). Hedonic well-being, or the pursuit of pleasurable experiences and the minimization of pain, is associated with research on emotional well-being (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction, balance of positive to negative affect over time), whereas eudaimonic well-being emphasizes quality of life and optimal functioning (e.g., psychological and social well-being; Keyes, 2006). Mid-20th century researchers conceptualized well-being as a cognitive conception of an individual's present situation compared to his or her aspired to situation, and greater satisfaction with life was viewed as an indicator of well-being (see Campbell, 1976, for a review). In his seminal work, Diener (1984) differentiated between telic theories of happiness, which posit that happiness can be the end result of attaining a goal, and activity theories that state happiness is a by-product of human activity. The early literature regarding theories of well-being, or happiness, is extensive and beyond the scope of this paper (for a review of happiness theories, see Diener, 1984).

In his review of the literature on subjective well-being (SWB), Diener (1984) asserted that SWB is a construct “concerned with how and why people experience their lives in positive ways” (1984, p. 542). Much of the early literature defined well-being in three different ways: as (a) virtue or holiness, (b) life satisfaction, or (c) more positive affect than negative affect. According to Diener, subjective well-being is a combination of the individual's experience of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and global assessment of life satisfaction. Diener (2000) later elaborated on the construct of life satisfaction, describing it as “people's evaluations of their lives...that are both cognitive and affective” (p. 34).

Ryff (1989) critiqued the subjective well-being literature as lacking sufficient grounding in theory and neglecting aspects of cognitive functioning. Drawing from mental health, clinical, and life span developmental theories, Ryff defined psychological well-being (PWB) in terms of positive functioning related to six dimensions: (a) self-acceptance, (b) positive relations with others, (c) autonomy, (d) environmental mastery, (e) purpose in life, and (f) personal growth. In the ensuing years, the two theories of happiness, SWB and PWB, were the subject of much debate in terms of defining well-being. Years later, however, Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) used data from the 1995 Midlife in the U.S. (MIDUS) survey and concluded that SWB and PWB are correlated yet distinct latent constructs.

Gallup based its definition of well-being on Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman's distinction between evaluative and experienced well-being (Lopez, et al., 2010). Evaluative well-being, according to Kahneman, involves the remembered experiences of their lives, while experienced well-being has to do with momentary affective states. The GSP defines well-being as "how we think about and experience our lives" (Lopez, et al., 2010, p. 10)

Measuring well-being. Measures of SWB evolved from single-item metrics, such as Cantril's (1965) self-anchoring scale that taps an individual's satisfaction with life, to sophisticated experience sampling measures. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) developed the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), a 5-item internally consistent ($\alpha = .87$) measure of life satisfaction that demonstrated good test-retest reliability (.82). However, SWB measures can be influenced by mood and by other situational factors, both short-term and long-term, as well as social desirability. As a result, Diener (2000) recommended that physiological measures, memory and reaction-time measures should also be included to fully assess SWB.

Additionally, because positive and negative affect are orthogonal constructs (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996), they should be measured separately.

Ryff (1989) developed a measure of psychological well-being, the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), that tapped the six domains of psychological well-being. In another study, confirmatory factor analysis supported the six-factor structure of psychological well-being and the researchers concluded that PWB is distinct from SWB (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Burns and Machin (2009) used exploratory factor analysis to validate the PWBS, and found, in contrast to the originally proposed six-factor model, support for a three-factor model of PWB: (a) autonomy, (b) positive relations with others, and (c) EGPS, a first-order factor comprised of environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These authors suggested that further analysis of the PWB scales should determine the extent that socio-demographic characteristics influence the validity of the scales. At a general level, researchers determined the PWB scales are appropriate for assessing aspects of PWV at a general level, though replication studies may be affected by sampling characteristics. Researchers confirmed that PWB is distinct from SWB (positive and negative affect). These researchers proposed a multidimensional and hierarchical model of well-being to account for differences in interpretation of well-being at different stages in life (Burns & Machin, 2009).

Gilman and Huebner (2003) reviewed the research on life satisfaction in children and adolescents. Several scales have been validated for use with youth: the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, et al., 1985). The Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1994), which other researchers determined had adequate convergent validity but was found to lack appropriate discriminant validity (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1998; Dew Gilligan & Huebner, 2002).

The GSP measures both evaluative and experienced well-being. However, the Well-being Index only consists of evaluative well-being, measured by a modified version of Cantril's Self-Anchoring Scale, commonly referred to as the "ladder question"—so named because it asks people to envision a ladder with steps numbered from 0 to 10 and put themselves on a step of the ladder (see Appendix B, item 1). This item asks students to rate how they feel about their lives at this time and five years in the future. The Well-being Index has a Cronbach's alpha of .64. The GSP also taps experienced well-being by asking four questions about how students felt yesterday:

Q15: Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?

Q16: Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?

Q17: Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?

Q18: Did you have enough energy to get things done yesterday?

Students who answered "yes" to all four items on the "Positive Yesterday Index" had high levels of experienced well-being. In a sample of 70,078 students, Gallup researchers found that student engagement was linked to engagement: 73% of students who had positive yesterdays were also engaged at school, whereas only 12% of students who did not have positive yesterdays were engaged (Gallup, 2009a). In the GSP sample of 2010, 77% of students said they were treated with respect, 89% said they smiled or laughed, 76% said they learned or did something interesting, and 86% said they had enough energy to get things done; however, fewer than half of the students surveyed endorsed all four items on the Positive Yesterday Index (Lopez, 2011b).

The next section reviews the research related to well-being, specifically focused on academic outcomes with students.

Well-being research. Research on well-being has largely focused on adult samples. However, in recent years investigators have been studying well-being in samples of children and adolescents. Interestingly, some differences have emerged between studies of adults versus children and adolescents. For example, in a study of approximately 120,000 adults and college students from 55 countries, researchers found that income significantly predicted SWB (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). But among adolescents, results are inconclusive; some studies report no differences in socioeconomic status (SES), while others report small differences (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). In terms of other demographic variables, Diener (1984) reviewed the available literature which determined that age and gender were not significantly related to SWB in adults, but there was an interaction effect between age and gender (e.g., younger women are happier than younger men, older women are less satisfied with their lives than older men). Gilman and Huebner (2003), however, found the research consistently revealed that life satisfaction was not related to age and gender in children and adolescents. As another example, multiple studies of adult samples found that SWB is correlated with race (Diener, 1984), whereas in adolescents and children, race differences were non-significant in some studies and modest in other studies (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). These inconsistencies suggest well-being may need to be thought of from a developmental perspective, although more research is needed in this area.

Regardless of gender, race, or nationality, most children and adolescents across international samples report positive life satisfaction. In their review of the literature, Gilman and Huebner (2003) reported that positive daily experiences were the most robust predictors of adolescent positive global life satisfaction ($r = .40$), and the cumulative effects had more impact than major life events, whether they were positive or negative ($r_s = .30$ and $.22$, respectively). Gilman and Huebner also reported that several studies showed global self-esteem strongly

correlated with global life satisfaction in the .40 to .60 range, although cultural influences may moderate the relationship. Additionally, Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono, and Wilson (2011) surveyed a sample of 1,035 high school students and found that life satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated with gratitude ($r = .69$) and self-reported GPA ($r = .20$), and negatively correlated with materialism ($r = -.10$), envy ($r = -.44$), and depression ($r = -.70$, $ps < .01$).

These findings have led some researchers to investigate the contextual factors that may be related to well-being at school. Suldo, Shaffer, and Riley (2008) studied 321 high school students and found that perceptions of social support from teachers, satisfaction with school, and academic self-concept predicted life satisfaction. Simultaneous regression analyses indicated that the students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships and parental involvement in schooling predicted global life satisfaction ($\beta = .23$ and $\beta = .15$, respectively, $p < .05$). Additionally, academic achievement ($r = .21$), classroom behavior problems ($r = -.16$), school satisfaction ($r = .44$), attachment to school ($r = .37$), personal academic beliefs ($r = .44$), and school climate ($r = .35$) were all linked to life satisfaction in students ($p < .05$).

In terms of social and psychological well-being, research findings indicate that “flourishing” youth function better (e.g., low depression, few conduct problems, and high psychosocial functioning) than “moderately mentally healthy youth,” who in turn function better than “languishing youth” (see Keyes, 2009). The findings from the GSP bear out the research data: “High school freshmen with high well-being earn more credits with a higher GPA than peers with low well-being. Specifically, the typical student who is thriving earns 10% more credits and a 2.9 GPA (out of 4.0), whereas a student with low well-being, completing fewer credits, earns a 2.4 GPA” (Gallup, 2009d).

Since the literature demonstrates a link between well-being and academic outcomes, the next logical line of inquiry is related to how well-being might be influenced in order to facilitate better academic outcomes. Research on well-being interventions is discussed in the next section.

Well-being interventions. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) argued that despite a broad span of well-being literature, most of it is cross-sectional in nature rather than longitudinal or intervention studies. According to these authors, 50% of a person's happiness is determined by genetics (the set point), 10% is accounted for by circumstances, and 40% is accounted for by intentional activity. Since only intentional activity is within a person's control, researchers have experimented with happiness-inducing interventions.

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) described two interventions (e.g., random acts of kindness; gratitude journals) that led to increased well-being. The first involved asking participants to perform five acts of kindness in one day, or spread out throughout the week, for 6 weeks. Compared to a control group, the results indicated a significant increase in well-being ($\Delta R^2 = .15$) when acts of kindness were performed all in one day, but no significant change in well-being for those who spread out their acts of kindness during the course of a week. The second 6-week intervention involved contemplating "the things for which they are grateful" either once a week or three times a week. The results for this intervention indicated the treatment group had significant increases in well-being compared to the no-treatment control group ($\Delta R^2 = .15$), but only for participants who "counted their blessings" three times a week.

These results support findings from two earlier experimental studies of gratitude interventions conducted by Emmons and McCullough (2003). One 9-week experimental-control study investigated the effects of a gratitude intervention on gratitude and well-being. The researchers randomly divided 192 college students into three conditions (gratitude, hassles, and

events). On a weekly basis, participants in the gratitude condition listed five things they were grateful for, while the participants in the hassles group listed five things they encountered that bothered them, and the events group wrote about neutral events that happened in their life, and so served as a control group. The findings indicated that the gratitude condition induced significantly more gratitude than the hassles condition and control condition ($F(2, 193) = 4.69, p < .05$, $ES = .56$ and $.28$, respectively). Researchers found people who cultivated gratitude through weekly listing of benefits also had greater well-being than people in the hassles or control conditions as indicated by life satisfaction ($F(2, 189) = 4.08, p < .05$), increased exercise ($F(2, 189) = 3.76, p < .01$), and reduced physical symptoms of illness ($F(2, 189) = 3.06, p < .05$).

In a second and related study, Emmons and McCollough (2003) randomly divided 157 college students into three conditions (gratitude, hassles, and social comparison) and participants were told to keep their daily written diaries over a 2-week period. The gratitude and hassle groups were identical to the groups from the first study, and the third condition asked participants to write down ways they are better off than other, less fortunate people. The findings showed that the daily gratitude intervention induced significantly more gratitude than the hassles or social comparison conditions ($F(2, 157) = 8.40, p < .05$, $ES = .88$ and $.39$, respectively). People who completed daily gratitude exercises had higher positive affect ($M = .24$, $SD = .75$, $F(2, 157) = 3.28, p < .05$) than the hassles group ($M = -.26$, $SD = .94$). The gratitude intervention group participants also were significantly more likely have offered emotional support to someone ($F(2, 154) = 2.98, p < .05$) than either the hassles group or the social comparison group. Researchers conducted a mediational analysis of the effect of a gratitude intervention on well-being, and the findings indicated that gratitude partially mediated

the effect of the gratitude intervention on well-being. Thus, both studies showed that expressing gratitude may be one way to increase well-being in adults.

Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) conducted an randomized control study of five internet-based happiness interventions and a placebo exercise on a convenience sample of 411 participants. The placebo exercise asked participants to write about their early memories every night for one week. The other five exercises consisted of (a) writing and delivering a thank-you letter to someone they had never “properly thanked,” (b) writing down three good things that happened to them every day, (c) writing about a time when they felt they were at their best and reflecting on it every day, (d) using one of their top strengths in a new way every day, and (e) using any of their strengths more often during the next week. The results indicated that writing down three good things that happened and explaining why they happened, using strengths in a novel way, and visiting a person and thanking him or her for something that person did were significantly effective in boosting happiness up to 6 months post-intervention ($F(5, 645) = 16.47, p < .001$, $F(5, 680) = 17.91, p < .001$, and $F(5, 750) = 6.88, p < .001$, respectively).

In a more recent investigation, Layous, Nelson and Lyubomirsky (2013) conducted a 4-week intervention study with a 2 (online vs. in-person administration) X 3 (peer testimonial vs. no testimonial vs. control) X 2 (baseline vs. follow-up) experimental-control design to investigate the effectiveness of two happiness interventions. The researchers randomly assigned 131 undergraduate students to one of six conditions: (a) online intervention with peer testimonial, (b) in-person intervention with peer testimonial, (c) online intervention without peer testimonial, (d) in-person intervention without peer testimonial, (e) online control group, or (f) in-person control group. The intervention consisted of having participants write for 10 minutes about their “best possible selves” in one of four different domains (academics, social, career, and

health), and then listing goals that would help them achieve their best possible selves. In two conditions (online and in-person intervention without peer testimonial), participants were provided with campus resources related to the targeted domain. In two peer testimonial conditions (online and in-person), participants were instructed to read a (bogus) quote from a fellow college student who completed the same writing activity one year earlier, instead of a paragraph about campus resources. In both control conditions, participants were told to list what they did over the past 24 hours. Results from this study indicated that there were no significant differences between the online and in-person conditions on the outcome variables, and that participants who completed the “best possible selves” activity had significant increases in positive affect ($t_{\text{contrast}}(115) = 1.85, p = .03, r_{\text{contrast}} = .17$) than the control groups. Additionally, those participants who completed the “best possible selves” intervention with the peer testimonial had significantly greater positive affect ($t_{\text{contrast}}(114) = 1.82, p = .04, r_{\text{contrast}} = .17$) than those who completed the “best possible selves” intervention without the peer testimonial and the control groups.

Summary of well-being literature. Overall, the research on well-being has been primarily limited to cross-sectional correlational studies that rely self-report measures of SWB. Moreover, only a few strategies (e.g., expressing gratitude, using one’s strengths in a novel way, visualizing one’s best possible self) have been shown to be effective in increasing well-being in adults. It is noteworthy that studies have also focused mainly on the adult and college student populations, and far fewer studies of well-being in children and adolescents have been conducted. Life satisfaction (evaluative well-being), and positive affect (experienced well-being) have been linked to academic outcomes in children and adolescents. Thus, Suldo and colleagues (2009) have called for more research on mesosystem-level (e.g., how relationships with peers

interact with perceptions of school climate or home-school collaboration) and exosystem-level (e.g., factors related to developing teacher-student relationships) variables that impact students' life satisfaction (Suldo, et al., 2009). The current study aimed to fill a gap in the literature by investigating those factors at school that may be related to well-being in adolescents.

Overall Summary of the Literature

The GSP is a relatively new measure of hope, engagement, and well-being in students. Therefore, only a small (but growing) body of research related to the GSP exists. Given the proprietary nature of the measure, Gallup researchers have conducted the majority of the studies related the GSP. Because of the scant available research on the GSP, this chapter reviewed the independent bodies of literature related to the constructs measured by the GSP: hope, engagement, and well-being.

Hope has been primarily investigated using Snyder's Hope Theory as a framework; therefore, it is the most cohesive collection of literature. Research has shown that hope is significantly related to academic outcomes and can be manipulated through interventions focused on the development of goal-directed, pathways, and agency thinking.

In contrast, multiple theories of engagement from several different disciplines exist, which has resulted in a less well-defined construct. In spite of this educational researchers have developed many strategies for enhancing student engagement, although not all of them have been empirically studied as effective ways to increase academic outcomes.

The well-being literature is diffuse, as well, and several definitions of the construct have been used in research studies. The bulk of the research on well-being has been conducted with adult samples. In comparison, relatively little is known about the correlates and predictors of well-being in children and adolescents, specifically as they relate to academic outcomes.

Additionally, the interventions have been researched almost exclusively with adult populations, resulting in a dearth of knowledge about what works to improve well-being in youths.

Given the current state of the research on the GSP and its related constructs, very little is known about how to improve hope, engagement, and well-being together in the context of a real-world school. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study was to expand the literature and investigate how educators in schools with high levels of hope, engagement, and well-being believe they are intervening and making a difference in their students' psychosocial aspects of their lives. This is the first step in developing a line of inquiry that will hopefully lead to interventions that can be tested and implemented in real life situations.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the conditions that facilitate the development of hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students. The four research questions this study aimed to answer were:

1. How are middle school educators using the GSP data?
2. How do middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being among their students?
3. What factors affect how middle school educators influence student hope, engagement, and well-being?
4. What are the similarities and differences between middle school educators' approaches to influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being?

This chapter provides a rationale for using a qualitative approach and an overview of the exploratory multiple-case study methodology. A description of the GSP measure and sample and case selection follows. It then describes the contextual characteristics of the middle school settings where the research was conducted. Next, the chapter focuses on a description of study participants, data collection and analysis methods, and data management procedures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness.

Overview and Rationale for Case Study Methodology

To this researcher's knowledge, all of the studies that pertain to the GSP have been quantitative and have been aimed at determining predictors and correlates of student hope, engagement, and well-being, and only a few theoretical interventions have been offered as possible ways to leverage the constructs in a real-world school context. To fill this gap in the

literature, this exploratory, in-depth study of the conditions that already exist in high scoring schools was undertaken as a first step toward developing empirically-based interventions specific to the measure.

Because the research questions in this study were aimed at developing a richer understanding of *how* middle schools are using the GSP data and presumably influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being, as well as the conditions that serve to facilitate or undermine school's efforts, a qualitative research design was appropriate (Maxwell, 2005). Case study methodology is the preferred method when the aim is to understand *how* or *why* a contemporary social phenomenon works within the real-world context in which the researcher has little control over the events being studied (Yin, 2009; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). In order provide support for the findings of one case study, as well as to identify rival explanations for the results, this study used a multiple-case, replication design (Yin, 2009). In this study, a single case was defined as a middle school that administered the GSP to students during the 2010-2011 school year.

Because this study involved direct contact with the participants, this researcher sought approval from the Human Subjects Committee for the University of Kansas – Lawrence Campus (HSC-L). Additionally, the researcher went through the IRB process at the school district level.

The Gallup Student Poll

The Gallup Student Poll (GSP; Lopez, et al., 2010; Lopez & Calderon, 2011) is a 20-item self-report measure of hope, engagement, and well-being in students grades 5 through 12. The measure is divided into three subscales: the Hope Index (6 items), the Engagement Index (5 items), and the Wellbeing Index (1 item). Remaining items measure positive youth development practices that are related to engagement (2 items) and experienced well-being (6 items).

The Hope Index consists of 6 items that tap the ideas and energy people have for the future (see items 2 through 7 in Appendix B). Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). Scoring is proprietary and no weights are used in the scoring. Results fall in three categories: “hopeful” (high hope), “discouraged” (low hope), “stuck” (remaining). Mean scores are reported to the schools as well as the percentage of students who are in each category. The Hope Index has adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.65$ to 0.78 , $M = 4.37$, $SD = .54$).

The Engagement Index consists of 5 items that tap a person’s involvement in and enthusiasm for school (see items 8 through 12 in Appendix B). Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*). Weights are used in scoring, and scoring is proprietary. Results are described in terms of three categories: “engaged” (high engagement), “actively disengaged” (low engagement), and “not engaged” (remaining). Mean scores are reported to the schools as well as the percentage of students who are in each category. The Engagement Index has adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.70$ to 0.76 , $M = 3.99$, $SD = .79$). Two additional items (13 and 14) tap the degree to which a school emphasizes strengths and the student engages in monthly volunteer work, both items that are related to engagement. These items are not included in the Engagement Index.

The Well-Being Index taps evaluative well-being, the way a person thinks about his or her life. It consists of a single item and is based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (see item 1 in Appendix B). Students are asked to evaluate their current and future lives on a scale (represented as a ladder) with steps (or rungs) from 0 to 10 (“0” = “worst possible life” and “10” = “best possible life”). Scores ranging from 7 to 10 on the present day scale and 8 to 10 on the future scale are categorized as “thriving.” Scores ranging from 0 to 4 on both scales are

categorized as “suffering,” and scores in between are categorized as “struggling.” The Wellbeing Index is calculated using both ladder items; however, only the future ladder is used to calculate the overall GrandMean. The Wellbeing Index has an adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.60$ to 0.64 , Ladder Now $M = 7.28$, $SD = 2.18$, Ladder Future $M = 8.46$, $SD = 1.73$) and the two scales correlate with each other (0.43 to 0.47).

Experienced well-being is measured by 4 items (see items 15 through 18 in Appendix B) that are answered in a “yes” or “no” format. Answering “yes” to all four items on the index indicate a student had a “positive yesterday.” Items 19 and 20 (see Appendix B) measure physical and social wellbeing, respectively, and are also answered in a “yes” or “no” format. None of these items are included in the three main indices.

The Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing indices positively correlate with related measures and show adequate validity. Gallup researchers conducted concurrent validity studies of the GSP with a subsample of over 12,000 students per index. All of the supplemental scales used had alphas greater than .70, and all of the resulting correlations between the GSP and supplemental scales were positive and significant (Lopez, et al., 2010). The Hope Index correlated most strongly with two scales that tap agency (Strengths Self-Efficacy Scale, $r = .61$; Gallup’s Selection-Optimization-Compensation Index, $r = .63$) and one brief measure of well-being (Gallup’s Good Worker Index, $r = .61$). It demonstrated moderate correlations with scales of engagement (Gallup’s Supplemental Engagement Scale, $r = .48$) well-being (Brief Multidimensional Student Satisfaction with Life Scale, $r = .51$; a gratitude scale, $r = .58$, Gallup’s Wellbeing Finder Short Form, $r = .50$), strengths (Gallup’s Strengths Awareness Items, $r = .48$), and Gallup’s Entrepreneurial Potential Index ($r = .46$). The Engagement Index correlated strongly with Gallup’s Supplemental Engagement Scale ($r = .71$) and weakly with

Gallup's Entrepreneurial Potential Index ($r = .26$). It had moderate correlations ranging from .51 to .59 on the other scales mentioned above that tapped agency, strengths, and well-being. The Well-Being Index correlated between .23 and .30 in magnitude with all supplemental scales.

The "Readiness for the Future Index" consists of the percentage of students who score in the highest categories (e.g., hopeful, engaged, and thriving) on all three indices of the GSP. Students who score high in all three categories are more likely to succeed academically and maintain good health over time (Lopez, 2011c).

Sample and Participant Selection

The sample for the study was drawn from the pool of schools that participated in the GSP during the 2010-2011 school year. The sample was limited to middle schools because research has demonstrated that compared to other grades, the trend is for students to experience a decline in hope, engagement, and well-being between fifth and 10th grades (Keyes, 2006, 2009; Lopez, 2009, 2011c; Marks, 2000; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Rumberger, 1995; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). It was believed that information gathered from middle schools alone might provide the clearest insight into why and how this phenomenon occurs. Additionally, keeping the sample constrained to middle schools as opposed to including elementary and high schools limited the complexity of the data analyses.

As these were educational settings and gaining permission from parents to interview their children was time-intensive and beyond the resources of this researcher, this study did not rely on student interviews. Rather, the students' scores on the GSP during the fall of 2010 were used as an indicator of student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being at each site (Gallup, 2010b).

In order to gain access to the data from the GSP, and thereby the study participants, this researcher contacted the developer of the poll, Dr. Shane Lopez, Director of Research for the Clifton Strengths Institute. Dr. Lopez maintains the GSP data and agreed to provide access to research data that included only middle schools (grades 6, 7, and 8) that administered the survey in the fall of 2010; this resulted in a total of 269 schools (Gallup, 2010b).

A quartile analysis was performed on the Readiness for the Future Index (RFI), the percentage of students who scored in the top categories on all three indices in each school (i.e., “hopeful,” “engaged,” *and* “thriving” students), to determine the cutoff scores for schools in the upper and lower 25% of the index. The range of RFI scores was 12 to 63. The cutoff score for the upper quartile was 40, and it was 28 for the lower quartile. Of the 269 schools, multiple schools had the same RFI score, which resulted in uneven numbers of schools in each quartile. A total of 21 schools were retained in the sample.¹

Because the Gallup Organization already had research relationships established with the schools, once potential school sites were identified, project manager of the GSP, Valerie Calderon, initiated contact with the principals of the selected schools and asked if they would be willing to participate in this research study. This was then followed with an email describing the study (see Appendix A). Seven principals from the upper quartile schools responded and said they would be willing to participate pending each school’s district-level approval of the study. However, only one high-scoring school district approved the research request, and three of the

¹ Nine schools scored at or below the low cutoff score on the RFI. One chief academic officer from a district in the lower quartile declined to participate, citing reduction in state funding resulted in eliminating positions that facilitated research projects in the district, as well as reduced teaching positions, assistant principal positions, and support staff positions (Devine, 2012). No other schools in the lower quartile responded to repeated requests for study participation; therefore, no lower quartile schools were included in this study.

seven schools from that district that met the inclusion criteria agreed to participate. Therefore, the cases analyzed in this study are limited to three high-scoring schools from one school district. To ensure anonymity, the names for the schools as well as the names of participants in this study have been changed.

Research Context

The context for this study was three high-performing public middle schools in a mid-size suburban school district in Kansas. The district has active parent organizations, an involved business community partnership, and draws from suburban and rural areas. During the 2010-2011 school year, the 21,641 students were enrolled across the 34 schools in the district (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The three schools chosen for this study, Prairie Range Middle School, (PRMS), Wooded Lake Middle School (WLMS), and Sheridan Bridge Middle School (SBMS; all pseudonyms), each scored within the fourth/top quartile of the RFI of the GSP (Gallup, 2010b). Students in these middle schools scored among the highest of all middle schools surveyed nationwide in hope, engagement, and well-being at school (Gallup, 2010b). Because this study reports on GSP data from the 2010-2011 school year, the student demographic data reported in this study is from the Common Core of Data (CCD) of the same school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Student demographic data from all three schools is displayed in Table 1.

Prairie Range Middle School. The school opened in 1998 and is located in a rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The school houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students and operates under a block schedule. According to the school's website, the school has two administrators, two counselors,

one psychologist, one nurse, one school resource officer, and five administrative support staff.

The teaching faculty consists of 32 certified teachers, six certified special education teachers, and

Table 1: 2010-2011 School Year Student Demographic Data

Characteristic	PRMS (N = 790)		WLMS (N = 665)		SBMS (N = 637)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade						
6	294	37	223	34	197	31
7	263	33	209	31	209	33
8	233	30	233	35	231	36
Gender						
Male	391	49	339	51	341	54
Female	399	51	326	49	296	46
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian/Alaskan	4	0.5	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	52	7	58	9	48	8
Black	21	3	24	4	31	5
Hispanic	26	3	24	4	36	6
White/Caucasian	669	85	543	82	500	78
Two or More Races	18	2	16	2	22	3
Free and Reduced Lunch	32	4	46	7	62	10

one library media specialist.

In 2010-2011, the school had a total enrollment of 790 students, with slightly more female (51%) than male (49%) students. The sixth grade had the most number of students (294), followed by the seventh and eighth grades, respectively (263 seventh grade students; 233 eighth grade students). About four percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 15% of the students were minority students (7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic, 3% Black, 2% two or more races, 0.5% American Indian/Alaskan), and 85% were Caucasian (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Wooded Lake Middle School. The school opened in 2002 and is located in located in a midsize city with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The school houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students and operates under

a block schedule. According to the school's website, the school has two administrators, two counselors, one psychologist, one nurse, one speech therapist, one occupational therapist, one school resource officer, and four administrative support staff. The teaching faculty consists of 37 certified teachers, seven certified special education teachers, one library media specialist, 10 special education paraprofessionals, and three library paraprofessionals.

In 2010-2011, the school had a total enrollment of 665 students, with slightly more male (51%) than female (49%) students. The sixth and eighth grades are relatively equal in size (223 students in sixth grade; 233 students in eighth grade) and larger than the seventh grade (209 students). About 7% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 18% of the students are minority students (9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 2% two or more races), and 82% are Caucasian (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). During the observation, the principal indicated that the school housed a special education program for students with pervasive developmental disorders, and special education students are the largest subgroup.

Sheridan Bridge Middle School. The school opened in 1989 and is located in a midsize city with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The school houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students and operates under a block schedule. According to the school's website, the school has two administrators, two counselors, one psychologist, one nurse, one school resource officer, and four administrative support staff. The teaching faculty consists of 36 certified teachers, three certified special education teachers, one library media specialist, four special education paraprofessionals, and two library paraprofessionals.

In 2010-2011, the school had a total enrollment of 637 students, with more male (54%) than female (46%) students. The eighth grade (231 students) was larger than the seventh grade (209 students), which was in turn larger than the sixth grade (197 students). About 10% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, which made this school a Title I School. Approximately 22% of the students are minority students (8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 3% two or more races), and 785 are Caucasian (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). During the observation, the assistant principal indicated that the school boundaries include fourteen different apartment complexes as well as single-family houses, thus there is a wide range of economic diversity among the student population.

Participants' Characteristics

Ninety-four certified educators across the three middle school sites consented to participate in this study. Teachers participated in one of four focus group interviews held at each site. Each focus group was comprised of members of a particular grade level team (sixth, seventh, or eighth grade) or co-curricular content area (exploratory classes) team ("Explo"; e.g., band, choir, orchestra, family and consumer sciences, computer technology, physical education, visual art, and Spanish) spanning all three grade levels. Participants completed a demographics questionnaire (Appendix E) and the resulting characteristics of the entire sample, as well as profiles by school, are reflected in Table 2. This table demonstrates that approximately 25% of the participants were male and 75% were female. One participant was Hispanic and the remaining 93 educators were Caucasian. The data in the table demonstrates that educators at all three schools have similar levels of educational training and experience in education and teaching at their respective grade levels and schools. Participant demographic information for each site is described in the following section.

Prairie Range Middle School participants. A total of 28 educators (74% of certified teaching staff) participated in four focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted with grade

Table 2: *Focus Group Participant Demographics*

Characteristic	Combined Schools (<i>N</i> = 94)	PRMS (<i>n</i> = 28)	WLMS (<i>n</i> = 40)	SBMS (<i>n</i> = 26)
Gender				
Male	24	6	12	6
Female	70	22	28	20
Race/Ethnicity				
White	93	28	39	26
Hispanic	1	0	1	0
Age				
Range	22 to 67	26 to 66	24 to 57	22 to 67
Mean	42	44	40	42
Education Level Completed				
B.A./B.S./B.F.A.	60	26	34	20
M.S./M.A.	81	24	35	22
Doctorate	0	0	0	0
National Board Certified Teacher	1	0	1	0
Years teaching at current grade level				
Range	0.5 to 39	1 to 39	0.5 to 25	1 to 29
Mean	7	6	8	9
Mode	1	1	1	1
Years teaching at current school				
Range	0.5 to 25	1 to 16	0.5 to 10	1 to 25
Mean	6	5	6	9
Mode	1	1	10	1
Total years teaching experience				
Range	0.5 to 39	1 to 39	0.5 to 35	1 to 37
Mean	16	16	15	15
Mode	7	7	6	8

level teams (e.g., sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), and one focus group consisted of the Explo teachers (e.g., band, strings, choir, Spanish, family and consumer sciences, computers, and physical education). Twenty-two teachers were female and six were male; all educators interviewed were Caucasian. The average age was 44 years, with the ages ranging from 26 to 66. Twenty-six teachers had bachelor's degrees (two B.F.A., nine B.A., 15 B.S.) and 24 held

master's degrees (nine M.A. and 15 M.S.). The average number of years teaching experience was 16, with a range of one to 39 years; however, the mode was seven years. The majority of teachers had only spent one year teaching at the current grade level, although the average number of years teaching at that grade level was six and one teacher had spent his or her entire teaching career at one grade level (39 years). The average number of years spent teaching at this school was five, with a range of one to 16 years. However, the mode number of years teaching at this school was one, which was likely due to a large number of newly hired teachers because a number of teachers left the school to open a new middle school building. Of note, this was the first year the principal served at this school.

Wooded Lake Middle School participants. A total of 40 educators (87% of certified teaching staff) participated in four focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted with grade level teams (e.g., sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), and one focus group consisted of the Explo teachers (e.g., band, strings, choir, Spanish, family and consumer sciences, computers, and physical education). Both administrators participated in the first focus group conducted as condition for being allowed to conduct research at this site, but at researcher's request did not participate in the other three focus groups to allow for uncensored conversation among staff members. Twenty-eight participants were female and 12 were male. One educator was Hispanic/Latina and the remaining educators interviewed were Caucasian. The average age was 40 years, with the ages ranging from 24 to 57. Thirty-four teachers had bachelor's degrees (three B.F.A., eight B.A., 23 B.S.) and 35 held master's degrees (11 M.A. and 24 M.S.). One teacher was a National Board Certified Teacher. The average number of years teaching experience was 15, with a range of 0.5 to 35 years; however the mode was six years. The majority of teachers had only spent one year teaching at the current grade level, although the average number of years

teaching at that grade level was eight and one teacher had 25 years teaching the same grade level. The average number of years spent teaching at this school was six, with a range of 0.5 to 10 years. The mode number of years teaching at this school was 10, which means the majority of the teachers, including the principal, opened the building since the school was 10 years old.

Sheridan Bridge Middle School participants. A total of 26 educators including two student teachers (62% of certified teaching staff) participated in four focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted with grade level teams (e.g., sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), and one focus group consisted of the Explo teachers (e.g., band, strings, choir, Spanish, family and consumer sciences, computers, and physical education). Twenty educators were female and six were male. All educators interviewed were Caucasian. The average age was 42 years, with the ages ranging from 22 to 67. Twenty teachers had bachelor's degrees (four B.F.A., five B.A., 11 B.S.) and 22 held master's degrees (11 M.A. and 11 M.S.). The average number of years teaching experience was 15, with a range of one to 37 years; however, the mode was eight years. The majority of teachers had only spent one year teaching at the current grade level, although the average number of years teaching at that grade level was nine and one teacher had spent 29 years teaching the same grade level. The mode years spent teaching at this school was nine, with a range of one to 23 years; however, the majority of teachers had only spent one year teaching at this school.

Data-Collection Methods

The data were collected from multiple sources at each site (e.g., four focus group interviews, direct observations, websites) as a way to minimize participant bias and enhance validity (Yin, 2009; Maxwell, 2005).

Observations. Observations were conducted on the same day as the focus groups at each school. The purpose of these observations was to understand how the school operates and to get a sense of the interaction between among the students and between the students and the staff. This researcher was escorted on a tour of each school and provided information about the school's background and culture by a staff member with knowledge of the history and systems at work within the school. The principals of Prairie Range Middle School and Wooded Lake Middle School, respectively, conducted the tours. The assistant principal of Sheridan Bridge Middle School provided the tour.

Data collected were recorded in the form of field notes. No formal interviews were conducted during this time; however, information provided by the person conducting the tour was included as data in this study. No identifying information of any students or staff was recorded during the observation.

Focus groups. The purpose of the focus group was to gain a better understanding of the methods educators use in their school to increase student levels of hope, engagement in school, and well-being, as well as insight into the factors that affected those interventions. Kitzinger (1995) advocates drawing upon "naturally occurring" or preexisting groups because it allows the researcher to observe interactions among people who already are familiar with one another and can build upon a common shared experience. Thus, the participants were representative of the adults that students have contact with throughout the school day (e.g., core subject teachers, elective teachers) and who interact with one another on a regular basis (e.g., grade level teams, content area teams). Administrators were not asked to participate in the focus groups in order to avoid possible inhibited responses due to a natural hierarchy within the school (Kitzinger, 1995). However, the principal and assistant principal at Wooded Lake requested to participate in the

first focus group as a condition of gaining access to the staff. It is unclear whether the teachers' responses were inhibited, but after the first focus group, I asked the principals to refrain from participating in the following groups because of the potential for reduced participation due to the presence of a person in higher authority. The principals consented to the arrangement. No other administrators requested to participate in the focus groups.

The original target length of each focus group interview was 60-90 minutes. However, due to constraints of the schools' schedules, focus groups were conducted during the 40-minute professional learning community (PLC) meeting time with each grade level and the Explo team. Therefore, four 40-minute focus groups were conducted at each site with the majority of the certified teachers using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C). At the beginning of all focus groups, participants were given an overview of the study and asked to sign an informed consent statement. In order to participate in the focus groups, participants signed and dated the informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix D). Confidentiality was discussed and participants were encouraged to keep the resulting discussion private. However, given the nature of the focus group involving multiple participants, the researcher made it clear that confidentiality of what is discussed during the focus group could not be guaranteed.

Each focus group was audio taped using a digital voice recorder and videotaped using a separate video camera in order to accurately transcribe the verbal data from the focus group. The distinct methods of taping ensured that the content was accurately captured, even if one of the devices malfunctioned. The audio recordings, videotapes, and transcripts were kept in a locked file cabinet. Electronic files were kept on a password-protected computer. Participants were only be identified by pseudonyms and no identifying information was included in written reports.

Demographic questionnaire. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E). The data from the demographic questionnaire provided insight into how individual and collective teacher characteristics may influence their interactions with students.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

The constant comparative method of data analysis (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is appropriate for these data and was used throughout the data collection and analysis process. During the initial phase of analysis, the researcher used open coding to capture the main ideas discussed within each focus group. Given the large amount of data, the within-case data were then coded using Dedoose, a secure, web-based, mixed method analysis software program (Lieber & Weisner, 2013). The software allowed the researcher to compare codes and excerpts from the four focus group interviews at each site in order to identify patterns and group codes into categories. Next, the within-case categories were triangulated with other data sources (e.g., GSP data, observations) and revised as needed. In the second phase, cross-case analyses of the findings from the individual case studies were conducted using the constant-comparative and triangulation methods to identify commonalities and dissimilarities (Yin, 2009).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure that the data collected were trustworthy and credible, multiple sources of evidence were collected from each site and triangulated to attempt to validate the findings. Data collected from interviews were recorded and transcribed by the primary investigator, and then another graduate student listened to the tape recordings while reading the transcripts to ensure accuracy. Additionally, multiple people examined and commented on the researcher's interpretations of the data throughout the analyses process. For example, two upper level

graduate students, who were not teachers, were not affiliated with Gallup, and who were not particularly strong proponents of positive psychology were recruited to perform validity checks on the analysis of the data. After being trained on how to look for themes using a codebook generated by the primary investigator, the people coded a randomly selected sample of the transcribed data and the field notes for themes. The coders were allowed to derive their own codes if they noticed patterns in the data that had not been previously identified.

On a different occasion, one complete set of focus group interviews from one case was examined by a group of graduate students taking a course in qualitative analysis. The students met with the primary investigator and provided input on patterns they noticed in the data and rival explanations for the perceived mechanisms of change. A second group of graduate students in a Positive Psychology class coded a randomly selected section of a different focus group and provided their perspective on themes that emerged from the data. In this manner, peer review ensured consensus about the themes that were present in the data.

Reliability

One way to address reliability in case studies is to develop a case study database so that other investigators could review the evidence directly should they desire to replicate the findings of the study (Yin, 2009). To this end, paper case study notes, narratives, and documents were stored in a file organized by the major subjects covered by the case study. Electronic files containing transcripts, tabulations, raw data, and other notes created by the researcher during the course of the study were stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer.

Summary

This chapter presented the research design and approach to data collection and analysis. It also addressed issues of trustworthiness and reliability, as well this researcher's attempt to

reduce bias and increase the validity of the findings. The findings from each of the case studies are presented separately in Chapter 4, and the cross-case analysis results are reported in Chapter 5. The last chapter of the study presents the conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the conditions in middle schools that seem to facilitate the development of students' hope, engagement, and well-being. The data collected from each site (i.e., the Gallup Student Poll (GSP) results, focus group interviews, guided tour observations, and the school's websites) were analyzed using a constant comparative approach and triangulation to identify common themes. The findings are presented as three individual case studies: Prairie Range Middle School, Wooded Lake Middle School, and Sheridan Bridge Middle School. While all three schools scored in the highest quartile on the Readiness for the Future Index (RFI) of the GSP, the schools are presented in order from highest RFI score to lowest. Each case is organized in terms of answers to three of the four research questions:

1. How are middle school educators using the GSP data?
2. How do middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being among their students?
3. What factors affect how middle school educators influence student hope, engagement, and well-being?

The last research question, "What are the similarities and differences between middle school educators' approaches to influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being?" will be answered in the next chapter by a cross-case analysis of the three case studies.

Prairie Range Middle School

The findings from this case are drawn from a combination of four separate focus group interviews with teachers, field notes taken during the guided tour conducted by the school's

principal on May 15, 2012, the students' responses to the GSP in the fall of 2010, and the researcher's reflexive journal notes. Qualitative and quantitative data were compared and clustered into groups according to common themes. Results are described in the following narrative summary.

GSP results. Prairie Range Middle School (PRMS) scored the highest on the RFI of all middle schools surveyed in the fall of 2010; 63% of students were hopeful, engaged, and thriving. According to the results of the 2010-2011 GSP (Table 3), 77 % of the students were hopeful, while 18% were stuck and 5% discouraged. Eighty percent of the students felt engaged at school; on the other hand, 15% were disengaged and 5% were actively disengaged. On the well-being index, 84% of the students were thriving, 16% were struggling, and no students were suffering (Gallup, 2010b).

Use of GSP data. The majority of the staff members did not know what the Gallup Student Poll was, and they did not know how the school had used the GSP data, if it had been used at all. Of the 28 educators interviewed, the most common response to the question, "How has your school used the data from the Gallup Student Poll?" was "I don't know." An eighth grade teacher said, "I don't think [we have seen the data]...if we have, I didn't know what it was. I mean, we could have, and then, you know we get so much stuff coming by us." Another teacher from the Explo team said, "We've talked about climate, but didn't know that it [the data] came from the Gallup poll. That's usually a target anyway in a building and with students and the way you conduct your classrooms, so, if we did talk about that, I wasn't aware that it came from a poll."

The seventh grade team did say they had used the GSP data the previous year to inform a school-wide, relationship building intervention that targeted students who had said they did not

Table 3: Fall 2010 GSP Data for PRMS and the National Cohort Samples

	PRMS	National
<i>Hope Index</i>	(n = 756)	(N = 249,819)
% Hopeful	77	53
% Stuck	18	31
% Discouraged	5	16
Grand Mean (out of 5)	4.63	4.39
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I know I will graduate from high school.	4.90	4.74
There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.	4.90	4.76
I can think of many ways to get good grades.	4.62	4.33
I energetically pursue my goals.	4.43	4.14
I can find of lots of ways around any problem.	4.23	3.85
I know I will find a good job after I graduate.	4.66	4.43
<i>Engagement Index</i>	(n = 760)	(N = 252, 427)
% Engaged	80	57
% Not Engaged	15	26
% Actively Disengaged	5	17
GrandMean (out of 5)	4.48	4.06
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I have a best friend at school.	4.72	4.49
I feel safe in this school.	4.66	4.03
My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	4.56	4.16
At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	4.41	3.99
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	4.02	3.58
<i>Wellbeing Index</i>	(n = 774)	(N = 266971)
% Thriving	84	65
% Struggling	16	33
% Suffering	0	2
GrandMean (out of 10)	9.01	8.51
<i>Readiness for the Future Index</i>	63	34

Note: Readiness for the Future Index is the percent of students who scored in the top categories of the three indices (hopeful, engaged, thriving).

feel they had “connected with an adult” at school. “It was pretty informal. We chose kids within our grade level...we just tried to connect with them maybe daily or just look out for that person specifically” (seventh grade teacher). Another teacher who was on the leadership team indicated the data were “probably” looked at by the leadership team this year, saying, “we talked about it and talked about trying to find a plan to address some of the issues in it, but I don’t think that that’s on the table at this point” (sixth grade teacher). Overall, it was clear from the responses of the teachers that almost all of them did not recall the GSP being given to students, had not seen the data, and only a few were aware that the relationship-building interventions had been developed as a result of the findings from the GSP data.

During the guided tour, the principal said that he was unsure of what to do with the GSP results because there were no clear guidelines established as to which interventions worked and which did not. He mentioned that teachers were stressed by having to adjust to the national Common Core curricular requirements and the continued emphasis on test score results. While it was not explicitly stated, this researcher got the impression that the principal was making calculated decisions about what to emphasize with his staff, and he did not want to stress them even more than they already were by putting pressure on them to raise GSP scores without a clear plan of action.

Perceptions of school interventions that influence hope, engagement, and well-being.

The following sections describe the teachers’ perceptions of how their school addresses student hope, engagement, and well-being. Four general strategies were identified as perceived ways the school influences all three constructs: (a) building positive relationships with students; (b) creating a positive, supportive atmosphere; (c) communicating clear expectations with consistent

consequences; (d) providing recognition and rewards. These strategies are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Building positive relationships with students. In every focus group, teachers said that building relationships with students was one of the ways to impact hope, engagement, and well-being. In this school, the principal made building relationships an explicit goal: “I remember [our principal] making the comment that he wanted to build relationships, so not only between him and us, but us with each other, and us with kids, and him with kids, and that’s been the goal this year” (sixth grade teacher). While providing a tour of the school to this researcher, the principal reiterated that he wanted to focus on establishing positive relationships among all of the stakeholders in the building because he believed relationships are the conduit for personal, professional, and academic growth. One seventh grade teacher reinforced that perception and said:

...you kind of have to touch their...hearts before you can even get to their brains, and I think that because we do have such connections with these kids on, like, who they are, what they do outside of school....and it really does help us build a bond with those kids outside of academics. And because we do have that bond, I think that’s why academically these kids make so much progress. And so therefore it does give them hope because that social-emotional piece is full or at work, and so therefore their academics are increasing also.

The implication was that creating positive relationships with students was a way to increase academic performance and hope for the future.

The administrator’s focus on building relationships was mirrored by his staff’s efforts to connect with the students at the school, starting from the first day: “We’re pretty good at getting

to know the kids right off the bat” (Explo teacher). For example, several teachers described a school-wide activity in which everyone in the school made a poster about themselves and their unique qualities, which was then displayed in the hallways for everyone to see. The faculty intentionally did the first set of posters at the beginning of the year, and then the student posters were rotated each week until all students had been displayed. The teachers said students routinely stopped to read the posters in the hallway and learn about the staff and each other. The teachers identified that activity as a starting point for building relationships with students.

Another way that teachers perceived they created positive relationships with students was to let the students know that they cared about them. An Explo teacher said, “The kids can tell that they’re in a building where the adults care about them. It gets very apparent that the teachers here are engaged in their jobs and that they want to be here and care about the kids’ success, which makes a big difference.” Their perceptions were supported by GSP results, where 93% of the students rated the statement “There is an adult in my life who cares about me” as a 5 on a 5-point scale and the mean score was 4.9 (Gallup, 2010b).

Most teachers said in addition to caring about students, it was important to connect with students so they would feel comfortable asking for help. Some teachers talked to students about their hobbies or interests outside of class to create a bond, while others used writing in journals as a way for students to express “a lot of things that they would maybe not say out loud, but they’ll say [on paper]” (seventh grade teacher). Other teachers mentioned that some students had connected with the assistant principal or principal and would talk to them if they needed help with a problem. Most of the teachers at all grade levels echoed the comments of a seventh grade teacher who said students “feel like they have a connection with at least one of us, if not more than one, and so that’s why if they do hit an obstacle, I think they’re like, ‘Hey, what can I do?’”

In fact, during one of the focus groups, a student came in and asked a question and the teachers collectively stopped the interview to answer his question in a kind and respectful manner, when they could have just as easily told him to leave and come back later. Through that small interaction, it was clear that the staff cared about students and had created an environment where the student felt comfortable asking an adult for help.

Creating a positive, supportive atmosphere. Another element that the principal and teachers said promoted high hope, engagement, and well-being in the school was the positive, supportive atmosphere in the school. There were several teachers who were new to the building and commented on the positive work environment: “I’m new, too...and I’ve got to tell you, this is the friendliest, nicest, most welcoming building I’ve ever been in my entire life. I’ve been in several, and it’s like, (her eyes widen and she gestures surprise...all teachers laugh) ‘You know my name! This is like [the T.V. show] *Cheers!*’ (all teachers laugh). You know, I’m not used that!” (eighth grade teacher). The principal, who was also new to the building, said his first priority this year was to make people feel valued and create a positive culture.

One way he fostered a sense of belonging was by giving everyone white t-shirts on the first day of school to wear to school assemblies. “And when we had our first “white-out” assembly, it was really cool because everybody was a part of it. I thought it was really fun being able to do that...and show our spirit” (eighth grade teacher). The principal also gave “shout-outs for birthdays on the announcements in the morning for faculty, staff, and students, [which] is awesome” (eighth grade teacher), and the counseling staff gave “students that struggle to find places...little jobs to do ...like putting a balloon in somebody’s locker if it’s their birthday...so that everybody can feel like they’re contributing to the school atmosphere” (sixth grade).

Another way the principal fostered pride in the school was to give “Pod Awards” to the students that were respectful to one another and kept their grade level pod area clean. The school was arranged in a semi-circle of three grade-level “pods” that housed the classrooms and locker areas that were connected by a long hallway that housed the Explo classes. The teachers in every focus group commented that the principal’s actions “helped make a real positive atmosphere” in the school (seventh grade teacher).

The teachers also facilitated positive environments in their individual classes and school-wide. For example, the sixth grade team described a “pyramids assembly” in which the physical education classes used cooperative learning groups to choreograph a dance and build human pyramids, which they “showed off” in an all-school assembly. “And then the teachers [went] out at the end and [did] one...and the kids...[got to say], ‘Hey, we did the work, now look at the teachers out there doing the same thing!’” (sixth grade teacher). By participating in the assembly, the teachers fostered a sense of togetherness in a fun way that the students could relate to. The art teachers also put on an art fair displaying students’ work along with reflections about their learning and creative process. “Then every student got to walk by and see that and read them and see what it meant to them. It was amazing” (Explo teacher).

The positive school atmosphere was reflected in the manner in which the students carried themselves in the hallways. Many students were laughing and smiling, and, in general, there was an energetic buzz during passing periods and at lunch. The students seemed to respect each other and the teachers and administrators, and in fact 90% of the students said they were “treated with respect all day yesterday” on the GSP (Gallup, 2010b).

The teachers in all the focus groups also commented on the “climate of respect” in the building (Explo teacher). Teachers on the sixth grade team embraced the idea that “you’ve got

to treat people [with respect] if you want to be treated that way.” Another sixth grade teacher said, “Even our sixth graders, even though they’re 12 years old, I think as a team we’re all pretty respectful to the kids...as a team we do a really good job of treating the kids with respect.” It was apparent that the teachers felt they could earn the students’ respect and encourage student engagement by taking a non-threatening stance: “They’ll do whatever you ask if they know that you’re not there to degrade them...or make fun of them” (Explo teacher).

The teachers pointed out that respect was a key factor in creating a positive, supportive environment. Several teachers compared experiences they had in other buildings where respect “was something that lacked all throughout the building” to the respectful environment in this school: “I can’t remember one time this whole year that a student has spoken back to me, or rolled their eyes at me. I mean, they might have done it behind my back (laughs), but they didn’t do it to me when I redirected their behavior...and...when there’s directives coming down to us from the administration, I don’t ever feel like they’re given disrespectfully” (Explo teacher). A sixth grade teacher put it this way: “I just don’t tolerate disrespect...I think by nipping those rare instances in the bud of ‘No, we’re not going to talk to each other that way. That’s disrespectful. That’s not the climate we’re going to have.’... establishing that early on in the year [promotes respect].” A seventh grade teacher summed up the positive vibe that was present in the school when she described an encounter she had with some students from other schools who were waiting for their friend to finish working on an assignment with the teacher after school: “After these girls walk out, they’re like, ‘Man, I wish I came to school here.’ You know, they see the difference between our seventh grade team and what they’re experiencing or seeing in other buildings.”

Communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences. Another factor that teachers and the administrators identify as important for fostering hope, engagement, and well-being is having clear and consistent expectations of student behavior. In terms of learning expectations, “our expectations are clearly stated at the beginning of the year” (seventh grade teacher). School-wide expectations for student behavior, termed “The Five P’s” (be punctual, be prepared, bring your planner, be productive, and be polite) were also displayed on large posters on the walls of the classrooms. If a student did not meet one of those standards, a teacher signed a designated page in his or her planner. Those students who did not have any signatures in their planner at the end of a certain period were able to sign up first for a school-wide “Success Day,” which is like a field day with games and fun activities.

The school promoted common expectations through their expectations as well as their school-wide discipline practices. Every grade level implemented the “Give ‘Em Five” discipline system, a five-step process used to address negative student behavior. A sixth grade teacher described it as a process where “we talk to that student on an individual basis and we kind of build them up, say good things, then we explain the problem and explain how they can go about doing better.” The teachers at all grade levels mentioned the positive impact the Give ‘Em Five strategy had on students, “whether it’s their attitude, or behavior, or even problem-solving...it works well on students. And we do it in a positive way, too, not just negative” (Explo teacher). A seventh grade teacher said,

The kids have consequences, but they have lots of chances to mess up, or to redeem themselves, and it’s very non-emotional. I mean it’s just laid out there. You know, this is what we expect and this is what happens. And I think that there’s a lot of hope when kids go to the office. Yeah, they go there maybe because they’re in trouble, but there’s a

connection there and they really try to engage the kids and make them feel as if, you know, we want to know how we can help you.

Some teachers viewed the Give ‘Em Five strategy as a way to help boost students’ hope. For example, “If they’ve got a roadblock...blocking their path to being successful or achieving what they want,” the teachers “talk about some things they can do and how they can get past that goal and give them hope that they can do it” (sixth grade teacher). In sum, having clear expectations and consistent consequences communicated early and often to students was cited by most teachers as a strategy that promoted students’ hope, engagement, and well-being.

Providing recognition and rewards. Another factor teachers perceived which made a difference in students’ hope, engagement, and well-being was the school’s intentional way of recognizing students and offering incentives and rewards for good behavior. Close to three-quarters of students (72%) rated the statement, “In the last seven days, I have received recognition and praise for doing good schoolwork” as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, and the mean score was 4.02 (Gallup, 2010b). The teachers at each grade level offered numerous examples of ways that the recognized students, from a student-nominated award for good citizenship to having school-wide assemblies recognizing students who participated in co-curricular and extracurricular activities like band, choir, orchestra, athletics, theater, or other clubs. The school also had a “Wall of Excellence” with the names and pictures of students who had excelled in academics or outside activities. The class pictures of the students who had “graduated” from the school as eighth graders were also displayed next to the entrance of the school.

In addition to recognizing students for achievement, the school provided incentives in an effort to motivate students to complete their work. For example, the sixth grade had a “Success Day” in the afternoon of the day that I visited the school. “They need to get all of their work

done, and then we have different activities, kind of like a little field day” (sixth grade teacher).

In the seventh grade, “as far as engagement and motivation...we’re having a big kickball tournament that the kids have to earn to go, and we’ve had recess....This has been a group [of kids] where they have to see something at the end of every couple of weeks and we’ve been trying to do that throughout the year, and it’s helped.”

The principal also instituted a way of rewarding students for good behavior by having teachers give students “Top Dog Tokens” when they “caught students doing something good” (Explo teacher). The “tokens” were small, duplicate forms that the teacher filled out when he or she saw students exhibiting any of the seven “school-district virtues” (i.e., respect, responsibility, honesty, compassion, self-discipline, courage, and perseverance). The student kept a copy, and a copy went to the office where the principal would collect them. “Then every Friday, he [the principal] draws three sixth, three seventh, and three eighth graders who get Top Dog prizes. And so that’s kind of a way to get a small amount of recognition. And the kids get excited about it” (seventh grade teacher). The students who won the drawing also had their pictures taken with the principal and posted on the wall outside the office. One eighth grade teacher said, “I think the awards target hope...I put them up in my room when I hand them out, and I try to give them out every week if possible...and they love to hear their name over the announcements.” Another teacher referred to the Top Dog tokens as a hope-boosting intervention “ ‘cause even students who may not be the best academic student can still look forward to something like that from the school” (Explo teacher).

The other program that the principal instituted was “Ten Dollar Tuesdays” that was funded by a grant written by one of the library’s paraprofessionals. The principal “checks with all the teachers first to make sure this kid’s been getting his homework in [and] they’re a good

role model, and then he pulls a name from a hat and they get ten dollars from Wal-Mart. And then once a quarter, they get an iPod or mini” (seventh grade teacher). According to staff members, the program was very successful at encouraging students to be engaged at school. Both the Top Dog Tokens and the Ten Dollar Tuesdays provided tangible ways for staff members to help students focus on attaining goals through “very small steps...and then you get these larger rewards...and then how that’s going to...move forward. It doesn’t just stop here” (Explo teacher). The teachers perceived that the future-oriented focus and celebration of attaining the goals promoted hope and engagement. One eighth grade teacher commented, “We know that it’s Ten Dollar Tuesdays and [students] are waiting (sits still and imitates students listening). Talk about hope! Please call my name!” (All teachers laughed).

Building relationships with students, creating a positive, supportive atmosphere at school, communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences, and providing recognition and rewards were highlighted as key factors that teachers perceived impacted student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. In addition, the teachers described other practices that their school did which they felt had hope-boosting effects: (a) providing a variety of support resources, (b) collaborative problem-solving, (c) and connecting current learning to future goals. These practices will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Providing a variety of academic support resources. The school not only recognized and rewarded students for succeeding at school; they also provided a wide variety of support resources to help struggling students. The staff members contended that the availability of support fostered hope in students because “they know that somebody’s going to help them...whatever it is, they have the opportunity to improve and change. It’s not like, ‘Oh, you didn’t get this. You’re done. Bye’” (seventh grade teacher). For example, the school counselors

were available every day to help students in need of emotional and psychological support. The teachers also were available every day to help students before and after school, as well as during lunch. As one seventh grade teacher explained: “All of us are not really 7:30 to 3:15 teachers. I think that the seventh graders really know that we all have open doors no matter what it might be.”

In addition to an open-door policy, the school also offered a seminar time several days during each month “where kids if they need help and redirection academically, they can get it—they can go to various teachers throughout the building, or if they’ve been doing a good job, there’s maybe a reward system” (Explo teacher). During the seminar time, teachers met with kids individually or in small groups to help them problem-solve. The eighth grade teachers pointed out that they felt it was important to help struggling students “build the confidence that they can do it by themselves, and they can improve and hard work will pay off...and [they will] be able to sit back and say, ‘Man, you know, I studied, and I got that ‘C’ all by myself.’” While the eighth grade teachers advocated for encouraging students and providing “avenues, like ‘I’m giving you every path around it’,” they also said it was important to “let [the students] be frustrated and try to find a way, and try to find it within them.” One of the teachers said allowing students to be challenged and to struggle, rather than doing it for them, allowed students to feel the “satisfaction...when they do it on their own...I think that gives ‘em hope” (eighth grade teacher).

Collaborating to problem-solve around obstacles to student success. When asked how the school helped students find ways around obstacles and encourage agency, the teachers responded that they had problem-solving meetings with the students, with the parents, and with each other to develop pathways towards student success. When working with students, the

teachers said they tried to individualize instruction “towards [students’] ability levels so that everybody’s challenged with the probably appropriate level, so that they can figure out that they’re gonna come across things they maybe can’t do right away, and then we help give them the skills and develop those to let them figure out how to do things on their own” (sixth grade teacher). Other teachers said they tried to focus on one-on-one support, “picking up on, ‘This isn’t going well for this student. What can we do to help them with this?’” (Explo teacher). In addition to individualizing instruction, the teachers also said that they encouraged students to persevere in the face of obstacles: “You run into hurdles, and all of our job is, ‘Hey, you can get through this.’ You know, ‘What do we need to do? What are the steps?’ You know, we need to chunk it with some kids, we do, but we get them, we teach them to hop hurdles and kind of tie it to life—‘You’re going to see these in life as well’” (sixth grade teacher). By tying the problem-solving to relevant future goals and reinforcing students’ efforts to think of ways around obstacles, the teachers felt they were helping students be more hopeful.

In addition to working with students individually, the teachers also made a concerted effort to involve the students’ parents in the process through weekly email or phone contacts. One sixth grade teacher explained why they attempted to collaborate with parents: “I think sometimes just talking to the parents and figuring out what’s going on with that individual child can be helpful because it’s not a one-size-fits-all situation. You have to go with each individual case.” The teachers would also ask parents to come in to meet with the entire team to discuss their student’s progress and develop a plan to help the student that involves both the school and the home. “I think this is a team that is on board with each other, which is then very honest with parents, and because of the way our team operates like that, it gets the parents to truly see where

their child lies, and so I think it helps make that progress sometimes go a little bit quicker” (seventh grade teacher).

Another component that was built into the school’s schedule was time for teachers to have weekly intervention meetings, “a time that you can offer to bring to the table some student that you think is having difficulty” (seventh grade teacher). In addition to the weekly intervention meeting, the teachers had a separate team meeting once a week that involved the counselors so that the team could gain more information about personal situations that may be affecting a student’s performance at school. One eighth grade teacher, who was new to the building, provided an example of what happens in the intervention meetings:

I could say, “I was really worried about Teresa today. You know, she hasn’t been turning in her work.” Then we all talk, and we can say, “Wow, she hasn’t...there must be something going on because she hasn’t done anything in my class either.” And so then we can flag it for either the counselors, or somebody will pull them [out of class] and talk to them privately. So I think that has been, as a newcomer, amazing for me to see how much [the staff] just are really worried about the kids and making sure they get in there. At every grade level, the teachers talked about the intervention meetings as pivotal ways not only to problem-solve to help a student academically, but also to show “We’re looking at the whole child. We’re looking at their social behaviors, their [situation] at home...everything...the emotional health and the mental health of these kids” (Explo team).

For instance, the sixth grade teachers said, “We’ve got one student that at the beginning of the year was...didn’t do anything...was totally not...um, didn’t talk to any of the other kids.” They went on to describe how they brought his case to the team and, together with the counselors and the administrators, they looked at his 5th grade records to determine what had worked in the

past and what hadn't, and "set up a goal, how to get this kid moving." Their solution involved talking to his parents during a team meeting to coordinate and find extra time to work with the student, and changing the student's schedule and recommending special education. The result of the intervention was "now he's social, he does work, he's learning, and so I think we've got examples to prove that we're doing something right" (sixth grade teacher).

The seventh grade team gave another example of a student who transferred in to the school and came from a "difficult situation...and had a lot of trouble with respect with adults." The teachers described talking about him often during their intervention meetings and contacting a teacher from his previous school to get more information about what worked and what didn't with this student. They learned that he "gets along with teachers who respect him," so they made a concerted effort to "take care of the social-emotional piece before [they] hit the academics." The English teacher "built that relationship with him from day one because he's a really good artist and a really good writer," and she encouraged him to leverage his talents to try to do better in other areas. The counselors also worked with the student on "making eye contact and simply how to say 'hello' to somebody in the morning." When the student was having difficulty, the team continued to try "to figure out different things. We never gave up." The teachers felt their efforts made a difference for the student because "he has changed dramatically...from the day he came to right now....It was like the first morning he said 'Hello' to all of us in the pod, we were like (has an amazed look on her face)...he lifted his head up [and] made eye contact (smiles)" (seventh grade teachers).

As a whole, the teachers from each grade level pointed to the intervention meetings they had as a way to build hope in the students. The sentiment is summed up by this eighth grade teacher:

“I think we have so many meetings about kids who are struggling. We do everything we can to make them think we believe in them and do whatever we can to make them feel successful. It doesn’t always work, but we do things we can. I think we put a lot of energy into that. Trying to figure out what works for them to feel like they can do better. I feel like that’s hope.”

The student responses to questions that tap pathways thinking on the Hope Index of the GSP provide further support to the teachers’ assertion that collaborative problem-solving builds hope. In response to the item, “I can find lots of ways around any problem,” 84% of the students rated the item at a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale ($M = 4.23$). Likewise, with the item, “I can think of many ways to get good grades,” 94% of students responded with a 4 or 5 (Mean = 4.62; Gallup, 2010b). Based on the triangulated data, it is logical to infer that the school’s collective efforts to encourage students to find ways to succeed at school may have some impact on the students’ hope.

Connecting learning to future goals. The eighth grade team of teachers specifically mentioned reinforcing a focus on the future, largely in relation to high school and college. As one teacher said, “Everything that we say is ‘Are you ready for high school? This is what they’re going to expect of you from high school’.” Logically, it makes sense that the eighth grade teachers would be preparing their students for the transition to high school. The eighth grade special education resource teacher, in particular, shared how she had recently taken her students on a field trip to the high school “so that they feel like when they walk in the building they’re part of that and they know what to expect...hopefully.” Her efforts to expose the student to the next step in his education appeared to energize the students and one particularly unmotivated

student was “excited about going to high school” when he returned from the field trip (eighth grade special education teacher).

She went on to say that she had been talking to her students and trying to prepare them by saying, “This is what your next year’s going to look like, how is it going to be different, how are the grades going to be important, and how many minutes of homework do you need to do every night.” The emphasis was largely oriented toward their academic future because, as one eighth grade teacher put it, “They’re going to high school and it’s going to start counting, and you know, you have to start thinking about colleges because it starts mattering next year.”

Though the eighth grade team emphasized the future with their students, other teams did not specifically mention a consistent focus on the future, nor was goal-setting consistent throughout the building. For instance, special education students were required by federal law to develop a written, four-year plan as part of their individualized education plan (IEP). However, another eighth grade teacher said, “We used to set goals and stuff, back in the day. We don’t really do that...we haven’t done that this year where the kids actually set goals. It could be personal goals, um sports, it could be, academics, but they, no we haven’t done that this year.” The sixth and seventh grade teams did not talk specifically about students’ setting goals, yet, one of the Explo teachers shared, “In my class they also set goals for themselves in sixth grade, short-term and long-term. We do it in eighth grade as well.” However, that teacher did not mention whether their seventh grade students set goals for the future. It seems that connecting student learning to the future was recognized by some, but not all teachers as a way to foster hope.

In addition to building relationships with students, creating a positive, supportive atmosphere at school, communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences, and

providing recognition and rewards, as discussed in an earlier section, the teachers and principals described one other way their school enhanced student engagement: through structured extracurricular activities. This practice is discussed in detail in the next section.

Offering numerous structured extracurricular activities. The most common explanation for how the school enhanced student engagement was through structured extracurricular activities. Involvement in school “is encouraged from the beginning of the year. Right when they enter sixth grade, it’s pushed, and they enjoy it. They get together with their peers; they do things” (sixth grade teacher). The teachers listed various activities in which students participated, including yearbook, student council, theater, band, orchestra, choir, athletic teams, and a community service club. The yearbook sponsor said that the students produced the yearbook for the first time in several years, “which really, I think, makes them more engaged in it and they have a final product that they can be really proud of” (Explo teacher). The community service club sponsor described a three-pronged approach to getting students involved at school: “We did it with a tiered method, where we started here, and then we worked within the community, and then ended up with Heart-to-Heart, which [was] more global. So, we’ve been able to engage them that way. And they’ve been really excited about it” (Explo teacher). Student responses to the GSP item, “In the last month, I volunteered my time to help others,” offers further evidence that students participating in community service activities, with just under one-third (71%) of the student body rating the item at a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (Gallup, 2010b).

While numerous opportunities to participate in structured activities were offered by the school, some teachers complained that the students were too involved in outside activities and could not find the time to participate in certain clubs. A teacher who sponsored student council said, “We were frustrated by the lack of involvement, or a little bit of apathy because I think kids

are so overextended. They do so many things, I mean, it's...it wasn't like if when we had a walk-a-thon and you say, 'Are you coming?' It wasn't like, 'No, I don't want to do that.' It was like, 'No, I have soccer, I have baseball, or I have this or that,' so they're kind of spread thin" (seventh grade teacher). It appears that many students were involved in structured extracurricular activities and engaged at school, but it could be that there was a tipping point when being involved in too many clubs or sports could actually reduce student engagement.

In terms of specific practices targeting well-being, teachers identified building relationships with students, having a positive school atmosphere, providing clear and consistent expectations and consequences, and offering rewards and recognition as important practices. Additionally, the teachers said they tried to foster positive peer-to-peer relationships. Lastly, many teachers commented on the importance of maintaining their own well-being because it "trickles down" and impacts the students' sense of well-being. While some interventions have been discussed earlier in this chapter (i.e., building relationships, positive atmosphere, clear expectations, rewards and recognition), the remaining practices are discussed in detail in the next section.

Fostering positive peer relationships. The teachers described several programs at their school that were designed to counteract bullying and foster positive relationships among students. One was a "Love is Louder" national campaign featuring a motivational speaker who talked about how words have the power to hurt or help people. In addition to the speaker, the students posted positive messages around the school showing gratitude for others. "That reached some kids and it was a campaign in the building for a little while" (Explo teacher). Teachers on the seventh grade team cited the "Five P's" and the Top Dog Tokens (described earlier) as other ways the school attempted to promote respectful behavior among students. During my

observation, I noticed also that the students were generally respectful to each other and the adults in the school.

The school had also recently received recognition as a model Mix It Up school. Teachers on the Explo team explained:

It's a huge thing and it's a national program and the work that they did this year got the school recognized as one of the top schools in the nation for the Mix-It Up concept, which is getting kids to mix-it up at lunch. Sit with kids that they wouldn't normally sit with, and then there's a little laminated sheet that's got the questions for the day. So you ask somebody, you know, "What pets do you have?" Well, it's, you know, trivial information, but I'm still getting to know something about you in a secure setting, and it's just making them talk to each other a little bit more.

The counselors at the school were in charge of the Mix It Up program, and the teachers shared that the students initially "kind of grumbled about it, and the counselors said they probably didn't do a good enough job at the very beginning telling them the purpose behind it...they just did it" (seventh grade teacher). However, the counselors took steps as the program continued to "put a real spin on it, though, where they play the music [the students] like, they have foods that are...you know...drawings, prizes, things that...a lot of positives that come with it to where [the students] kind of look forward to it now" (seventh grade teacher). An Explo teacher added, "They take a lot of pictures, and then the kids' pictures are posted outside the counselors' door so they can see who everybody was mixed up with. And they love seeing their pictures on the wall. I mean there are pictures of kids all over the building." While it is impossible to determine at this point whether any single intervention or combination of strategies the school had in place

caused students to have positive peer relationships, the teachers and the principals believed that the programs had a positive impact on how students treated one another.

Enhancing staff morale: the “trampoline effect.” In this school, the most common response to the question, “How does your school address hope, engagement, and well-being in your students?” was “it comes from the top.” A sixth grade teacher dubbed it “a little trampoline effect,” and explained that “[respect] trickles down. It’s definitely trickle down. It goes down to the kids. You treat the kids the same way you’re treated. And it goes down and comes back up.” Other seventh grade teachers echoed the idea that the principal set the tone for the school and said, “It goes back to the environment and the culture he’s built to establish the well-being among the staff, which then filters down to the kids.” As one teacher put it:

Having been in other buildings also, I think that, um, one thing that’s really apparent here is that the administration is strong and happy and the faculty is strong and happy. Because I’ve worked in buildings where things always come from the top down, and the administration was negative, and then, in turn, the faculty was negative, and then, in turn, the students were negative. And that negative atmosphere and attitude kind of permeates through the whole school.

Whereas here, it’s very apparent when you walk in the building that the administration is happy to be here and proud to be here, and the teachers are happy and proud to be here, and then the students are as well. (Explo teacher)

Several teachers mentioned that the positive attitude of the principal, along with his actions toward the staff members, impacted the way they thought about their students and their students’ well-being. For instance, one Explo teacher shared that the principal had “made a list for us of

thanksgiving...of the quality that he sees in us that he's thankful for in each one of us. And that, you know, it may also make you think about the kids that way too."

The principal indicated that his first priority as a new administrator for this building was to ensure that people in the building felt valued. The teachers indicated that the principal communicated that he valued the staff early on in the school year. One seventh grade teacher said, "I just remember him at the beginning of the year having his hands like this (cupped together in front of him) 'We got to take care of the egg, or something, and not drop it, you know, 'cause what we have is something special.'" Another seventh grade teacher shared that the principal began a T.O.F.U. (Time Out For You) award program as "a way to nominate another staff member for, you know, just to thank them for something...And then when we have staff meetings and early release, he'll draw out one of those yellow forms, and then let the nominator read [what they wrote]. It's just kind of a way to give a little bit of recognition to a peer." Providing the teachers with the opportunity to provide positive feedback to one another on a regular basis appeared to be one way to encourage a sense of togetherness. The principal also infused fun into staff meetings and professional development, whether through a "Helmet of Hilarity" given to a staff member to wear as he or she shared a humorous story at faculty meetings, or a professional development day with Olympic-style team building events that were "not silly team building stuff that everybody dreads, but...it just was a great way to work with people that you normally wouldn't work with, to establish relationships" (seventh grade teacher). The value of team building was underscored by an Explo teacher who said, "He [the principal] also did a lot of team building too with the staff which is really, really important. I find that in other buildings when that doesn't happen, people get real separated and you don't come together and you begin to feel isolated." In every focus group, the teachers consistently commented on

their appreciation and respect for the administrators in the building because “no matter what happens, [the administration’s message is] we’re in this together. That you will be treated fairly and with compassion, yet be held to a standard” (eighth grade teacher).

The teachers clearly responded positively to being supported and treated with respect, which appeared to make them more likely to take risks to better their teaching practices. For example, one Explo teacher said,

I personally feel very supported by this team of teachers and by the administration. I feel comfortable going to either [the principal] or [the assistant principal] to ask for things that I need, or support, or help in dealing with a situation, or just, ‘Hey, can you come into my classroom and observe X, Y, and Z?’ And that’s not something that I’ve ever had in another building where I’ve felt completely comfortable going to either the assistant or the principal to talk about that stuff.

A sixth grade teacher also remarked that the positive stance of the administration “rubs off on everybody where it’s like, you know, ‘We’ll figure it out. Let’s not get too worked up about it.’”

A different sixth grade teacher added: “If some negative things need to be addressed, then [the principal’s] using the right channels to do it and...just staying positive no matter what you’re feeling...you know, getting back to leadership.”

The administrator’s efforts to build relationships among the faculty appeared to be paying off. One seventh grade teacher said, “I’ve been here five years and I would say this is the closest and most in touch our staff has ever been before with one another. There’s no drama...it’s a great place to come to work every day.” Another seventh grade teacher who was going to transfer to a

different grade level the following year even shed tears when talking about her relationships with her teammates:

I've had highs and lows this year, in and out of school, and these girls have done nothing but take care of me (crying)...and to leave that and go on...you just...it's very easy to come to work every day when not only do you love what you do, but this is what you come to every day. And that's what makes a school (all other teammates nodded). And you can't replace that, I don't think.

During that focus group, the other teammates also were tearful at mention that their teammate would be moving on, and then laughed with each other about their expressions of emotion, indicating a sense of closeness among them. The teachers believed that their attitudes toward each other was apparent to the students as well: "The kids see that we are talking and laughing about each other, or we'll say something about another teacher in the class and laugh, and you know, and they know...they enjoy that 'cause they pick up on if there's friction or tension or whatever, and they're, you know, they're just like your own family. It's like, 'Ohh, are you guys mad at each other?'" (all laughed; seventh grade teacher). As the faculty talked to one another, it was evident that they enjoyed each other and had formed bonds with each other professionally and personally.

Along with having close relationships, the staff appeared to collaborate well, too. An Explo teacher said, "This team works together really well. So if somebody needs something, the band needs to go to practice, we don't mind...the art fair needs cookies, we don't mind. I feel like we all work together and the kids see that and they cooperate and do what they need to do."

Overall, the teachers appeared happy to be at this school, which they attributed to the supportive, positive atmosphere that encouraged responsibility and was modeled by their administration. Three veteran Explo teachers stated:

Teacher E: This is one of the most positive buildings I've been in school-wide: teacher, administration, student...and I've been in the district for quite a long time.

Teacher H: And I've come from other districts, too, and I'd have to say this is the best I've ever seen in 22 years.

Teacher A: And I've taught 39 and it's my very favorite year, out of all those years. To have such a positive atmosphere, it's fantastic.

Most teachers referenced the importance of positive relations among the faculty, having witnessed the effects of negative as well as positive staff attitudes on the well-being of the students. For instance, one eighth grade teacher said, "I've lived through years where it was really miserable...miserable teachers because the staff is [negative], or the principals are so hard to get along with or they're stressed out, and then the whole environment is just...I think the kids sense it. I think the kids sense that we like each other and we like being here, and that makes them have a comfortable feeling." In this building, the staff members believed in the "trampoline effect," and it was evident that they took time to nurture their relationships as one way to enhance student well-being.

Perceptions of factors that affect the school's intervention efforts. Because the educators described various factors on multiple levels that could impact hope, engagement, and well-being, the findings in this section are presented in terms of the systems identified in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The

systems that influence a person's development over the lifespan are conceptualized as concentric circles representing systems of influence on an individual. In the center is the individual, which is made up of inherent, biological characteristics. Moving out from the individual, the next circle of influence is the *microsystems*, including family, peer, and school systems in which the individual directly participates. The next layer is *mesosystems*, or interactions between the various microsystems that directly impact the individual, such as family-peer group relations or family-school interactions. The *exosystem* layer follows, which consists of processes that impact people in the microsystems but are external to the individual and therefore indirectly impact student development. The relationships a parent or a teacher has to their worlds of work are examples of exosystems. The outermost circle is called the *macrosystem*, and consists of societal contextual variables that shape an individual's development, such as socioeconomic status, discrimination or racism, terrorism, war, or governmental policies. All systems: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- impact the individual's development over time, and the findings in this section are organized according to systems to try to capture the contextual variables that likely impact the development of student hope, engagement, and well-being.

Individual student characteristics. Some teachers alluded to differences in self-concept and internal motivation as factors that can positively or negatively affect the school's efforts to help them.

You can see those kids who are driven and it comes from within. It doesn't come from mom and dad; it comes from within. They have that inner sense. And try to get somebody who you can see who doesn't...I'm thinking of a particular individual where he just doesn't...he's like, 'I'm a C student, I'm a D Student. It's fine with me. I don't care.' And how do you get them beyond that? Because you do feel kind of like a bumper

car, sometimes, where you keep bumping up against that and you keep trying to find different ways to reach him. And I think that's, I mean, when it comes down to it, it comes down to them wanting it—enough. (eighth grade teacher)

Another teacher seemed to think the developmental differences in students played a role in their students' readiness for the future: "Just as there is in their size, their maturity level varies greatly. And I think the bulk of them are probably ready to move on; some maybe not" (seventh grade teacher). In some cases, teachers felt their ability to influence students was limited by individual student characteristics, while others said the students' personality traits made them more likely to respond to the school's interventions.

Microsystem factors. In terms of microsystem factors the staff focused on how the students' home environment impacts their ability to work with students: "We have some limitations because the environment at home plays a huge factor" (Explo teacher). At this school, teachers believed that the students' relationships with their parents impacted their sense of engagement, hope, and overall well-being at school. "We have parents that are really concerned about what their kids are doing and what kind of grades they're getting...they all expect them to go to college and expect them to be successful...Our kids know they're supposed to be successful; they know they're supposed to go to college" (Explo). The pervasive expectation among parents, teachers, and students alike was that all students would graduate from high school and go to college. In fact, 99% of the students at this school responded with a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale to the item, "I know I will graduate from high school," ($M = 4.90$) and 95% responded similarly to the item, "I know I will find a good job after I graduate," ($M = 4.66$; Gallup, 2010b). However, some teachers acknowledged that "some parents are more hands on than others in the evening, and sometimes we have to recognize that this child's mainly going to

benefit from what we can do within the school day, and in some cases you really have to stop and think what can we do here at school to help this child because they're probably not going to get as much support at home as all the other kids" (sixth grade). Other seventh grade teachers mentioned that the demands placed on students from home to excel in extracurricular activities as well as academics often resulted in stress in their students, which in turn, affected their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at school.

Mesosystem factors. The faculty viewed the interactions between the parents and the school as critical to student success. "Parents are the missing component sometimes for kids, and even if your child's 14 or 15, you need to be involved in their educational experience. That's very important. 'Cause I only have them for an hour a day. You have them every day. So with that partnership with parents, I think you can move [students] forward" (Explo teacher). One sixth grade teacher described the interactions between the home and the school in terms of a three-legged stool: "Without all three [legs] on the ground, you don't have anything. You need the kid, you need the teacher, and the parent together. You lose one of those legs and that stool's tipping." In general, the level of parental involvement and support of the students at school was viewed favorably by the teachers. "I think parents support our school. And a lot of that is at the grassroots level of building relationships with the parents, getting them to trust us. 'Cause some parents come in...if they've ever had a teacher they didn't like, which a lot of people have, you know, you kind of have to do some damage control at the beginning to get those parents on board and trust [us]" (sixth grade teacher). However, that was not always the case, and teachers said if the parents and teachers do not work together, "it can be a little more challenging because whatever we do, then sometimes things can be undone [at home]. So you just hope we can do enough here and get [students] involved in things" (seventh grade teacher).

Exosystem factors. All of the teachers commented on the importance of their administrator's leadership style and support as determinants of the climate of the building and the well-being of the staff and students. According to a seventh grade teacher: "I've worked for a lot of principals [and] I think micromanaging is a real problem with some administrators. You've got to trust the people who work for you. Because you can't do everything. And I think it undermines people's confidence and their trust level." Another teacher indicated that as a whole staff, being treated professionally by their administrator inspired them to do their best work:

He [the principal] just treats us so professionally, and that's why everybody does what they're supposed to do and nobody leaves early, and everybody does, you know, gets here to school on time and they try to do their part, and be in the hallways, and just all the things that any administrator would be thrilled of. We do it because we want to please [our principal] and [our assistant principal]. (sixth grade teacher)

That sentiment was echoed by several teachers on the Explo team:

Teacher I: I think the administration does a really good job of respecting our time and respecting our professional judgment and opinions and the way that we run our classrooms. And I think that is very helpful.

Teacher D: They treat us like professionals and allow us to be professionals.

Teacher H: Mmm hmm. All the respect comes from the top down. You know, and it just, when you get treated with respect, you treat others with respect.

The administrative staff's efforts to respect the faculty resulted in the teachers respecting the administration, a feedback loop that inspired a positive feeling with the adults in the

school and which, according to the staff, filtered down to impact the students' well-being too.

Another factor that inspired confidence in the school's leadership was the principal's intention to lead by example and be accountable to his staff. One sixth grade teacher put it this way:

Well, I was in business, um, 18 years prior to education. It's no different. You know, the companies that do well have strong leadership. And they're prepared to roll up their sleeves and do the same work they expect of their employees. They still have compassion for you, they usually came from the teacher ranks, they know where you are, you know; there's empathy. Um, and that, that lends to support. You know, you support people that are like that. They're natural leaders. You want to follow them. So, I think we've got that, and that's been pretty key this year. That's been a pretty positive change.

Two teachers also commented on the principal's integrity and willingness to take responsibility for his actions when he made a mistake:

Teacher A: And he admits when he makes mistakes (all agree) or when he slips up on something. He's the first one to say, 'I'm so sorry I messed that up. I'll do it better next time.'

Teacher J: Yeah, 'I forgot to send that out. Sorry.'

Teacher A: And, 'I forgot to do that. So sorry I promised you [and then] I didn't do it.' And then we move on. And that's you know, it's all part of the servant leader attitude thing that [my colleague] was talking about. (sixth grade teachers)

The principal's actions made a positive impression and inspired respect for him among the staff because he was willing to admit when he was wrong.

Another action that influenced the staff's perceptions of the administration was visibility. The principal routinely walked into classrooms, observed the lessons, and interacted with students, which seemed to influence directly student engagement and indirectly send the message that he is holding teachers and students accountable for their teaching and learning. As one Explo teacher put it:

He's [the principal's] helping them be responsible for what they're learning, not just sitting there like lumps taking information in. He wants to know, 'What are you learning today? You know, do you know what you're supposed to be doing today?' And so we've had stuff up on walls, but then when he comes in and he asks the kids, you know, they see that once, and then they're like, 'Oh, [the principal] is going to come, I better know what I'm doing.'

The teachers appeared to value the principal's visibility, rather than feel threatened by it. The response to the principal's efforts to encourage accountability for learning seemed to be related to the administrator's positive approach toward the students: "He'll just walk in, and see what's going on, and interact with a kid, and say, 'Hey, what are you doing today?' And um, in a very caring way, not like 'What are you doing? Are you doing what you're supposed to be doing?' but, 'Hey, what's going on? What are you working on?'" (Explo teacher).

The principal's non-threatening way of providing feedback was not limited to the students. As a seventh grade teacher explained, "Within the classroom, you don't feel intimidated or you don't feel as if you're a failure if you go for help. Say I'm having trouble with this student, [the principal says] 'Oh, what can we do to help you? We know you guys work

hard, and we know...I mean, that's our job.' That's the first time I've seen that in a long time."

In listening to the teachers talk about their administration, there was a pervasive feeling that many of them had not felt respected by their previous principals, and a change in administration was refreshing, surprising, and welcome. For example, an eighth grade teacher said:

Coming from another school where the, um, the administrative staff was a little more punitive in their approach to the faculty makes a huge difference, too.

When you go to the faculty meetings and you're just scolded and told what you're doing wrong, uh, it doesn't go well for making people feel happy to be there.

Even if their intent is to make things better, you know, it doesn't work.

Instead, the staff commented on how much they appreciated the current administration's "kinder, gentler approach. It's how I want to be treated as an employee. I think it helps me to be wiser in how I treat the kids and the people around me because it's modeled for me every day" (eighth grade teacher).

The teachers were also aware of the position of power they were in regarding their ability to influence student perceptions, behaviors, attitudes, and learning:

I think the teachers, us as team, spend as much time with a student as a parent does. Probably about equal, when it gets down to it. Or close to it... So I think we have a huge influence on students, and I think that that's the reason as a teacher that we have to be great role models and constantly be making the right decisions and being patient and not letting our emotions get the best of us. We're just always trying to show what positive behavior is, responsible behavior is, and what it means to be a good person and a good citizen. (sixth grade teacher)

Another seventh grade teacher commented on how teachers' attitudes and reactions to challenging student behavior can impact the functioning of the entire team: "I was thinking we're all very positive people and I think that impacts how the students are...as [my colleague] mentioned, the group's kind of challenging, we could have taken this right down into the gutter and we haven't, and so everyone's still having a good year." A sixth grade teacher described her approach to student behavior problems:

You address those student situations and problems, behavior problems, and you do it, and you don't let it get to you. You don't let it personally invade and upset your own wellbeing...I can see where some teachers that have a lot of behavior problems could get kind of disenchanted and that would effect their mood and their own, you know losing patience, and like that. So, you know, we all struggle with that 'cause we get so wrapped up in our jobs and our relationships with students and teachers, but, I think, you know, like [our principal] told us, 'Put [the responsibility] on [the student] and go home and go to sleep at night.' (sixth grade teacher)

In sum, the teachers' relationship with their work environment, including interactions with administration, staff, students, and parents, is a factor that certainly impacts their attitudes towards their job, which also impacts how they relate to students in and outside of the classroom.

Macrosystem factors. Several of the teachers also felt that the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students and the location of the school in a wealthy suburb also affected their ability to influence students' hope, engagement, and well-being. "You're dealing with a unique kid out here, I mean, socioeconomic status—high—educated parents...and getting outside, going to [the surrounding urban areas], you don't have the parental involvement the way we do here" (sixth grade teacher). Another sixth grade teacher said, "The [student] behaviors we have here are

much different than probably what a lot of schools have in different parts of the community,” implying that the students at this school are more well-behaved than at other schools because of their SES. One Explo teacher said the parental involvement and expectations of their students’ academic success was a result of the location of the school:

In a lot of [other] places parents have so many other issues that they’re dealing with that their kid’s education, whether it should be, isn’t their top priority. You know, whether they’re getting in trouble, whether they’re going where they’re supposed to be. And so when you live in a successful area, it just breeds more success (other teachers nod their heads in agreement), which is just the opposite in many bad areas. That’s the only life they know.

Although results from this case study cannot confirm that the school’s location and the student population demographics have a direct impact on hope, engagement, and well-being, what is evident is that there is a perception among teachers that those macrosystem factors do affect their ability to implement their specific interventions with students. The impact of SES on schools efforts to boost student hope, engagement, and well-being continues to be an issue in need of further research.

Wooded Lake Middle School

The findings from this case are drawn from a combination of four separate focus group interviews with teachers, field notes taken during the guided tour conducted by the school’s principal on February 23, 2012, the students’ responses to the GSP in the fall of 2010, and the researcher’s reflexive journal notes. Qualitative and quantitative data were compared and clustered into groups according to common themes. Results are described in the following narrative summary.

GSP results. According to the results of the GSP taken by students in the fall of 2010 (see Table 4), 70% of the students were hopeful, while 21% were stuck and 9% were discouraged. Seventy percent of the students felt engaged at school; 20% were disengaged and 10% were actively disengaged. And on the Well-Being Index, 76% of the students were thriving, 23% were struggling, and 1% were suffering. Although the school scored in the upper quartile of the RFI of all middle schools surveyed, only 50% of students were hopeful, engaged, and thriving (Gallup, 2010b).

Use of the Gallup Student Poll data. At Wooded Lake Middle School (WLMS), the principal was the first person to receive the results from the GSP. Several teachers from different grade levels indicated that they had examined the data from the previous year at in small groups during a faculty meeting, which was corroborated by the principal. During the faculty meeting teachers compared the data across years and across grade levels, and they brainstormed ideas for improving the school and supporting well-being.

Several teachers commented on how reviewing the data prompted greater awareness of the emotional and psychological states of the students. For example, one seventh grade teacher said, “It’s made me think a lot about how it, on the surface, it could seem like so many of them are doing well emotionally, and they probably really are, but then thinking about still if you have one, two, three in your room per day, that feel at a loss for whatever reason, um, that that’s really important.” In particular, the data regarding students feeling respected at school surprised one Exploratory teacher: “The eighth grade class we have now scored, I guess you could say 25% lower than...every year in this one aspect and that’s do they feel like they are respected at school....I think without the school having taken the initiative to show it to us, I wouldn’t have known that.” Another teacher described the effect that seeing the data had on her practice in the classroom:

Table 4: Fall 2010 GSP Data for WLMS and the National Cohort Samples

	WLMS	National
<i>Hope Index</i>	(n = 607)	(N = 249,819)
% Hopeful	70	53
% Stuck	21	31
% Discouraged	9	16
Grand Mean (out of 5)	4.53	4.39
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I know I will graduate from high school.	4.85	4.74
There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.	4.86	4.76
I can think of many ways to get good grades.	4.52	4.33
I energetically pursue my goals.	4.24	4.14
I can find of lots of ways around any problem.	4.04	3.85
I know I will find a good job after I graduate.	4.56	4.43
<i>Engagement Index</i>	(n = 620)	(N = 252, 427)
% Engaged	70	57
% Not Engaged	20	26
% Actively Disengaged	10	17
GrandMean (out of 5)	4.26	4.06
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I have a best friend at school.	4.63	4.49
I feel safe in this school.	4.52	4.03
My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	4.33	4.16
At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	4.19	3.99
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	3.61	3.58
<i>Wellbeing Index</i>	(n = 633)	(N = 266971)
% Thriving	76	65
% Struggling	23	33
% Suffering	1	2
GrandMean (out of 10)	8.67	8.51
<i>Readiness for the Future Index</i> (% Hopeful, Engaged, and Thriving)	50	34

Note: Readiness for the Future Index is the percent of students who scored in the top categories of the three indices (hopeful, engaged, thriving).

I thought about the thing, about the students not feeling respected...and that was good for me to think about and served me to reflect on...how maybe I'm perceived as a

teacher...am I, um, do I give off a lot more negative than positive feedback to my students? Do they take that as disrespect? You know? So, it's been a good thing for me as a teacher to reflect on that and my role and how they feel as far as being respected.

(Explo teacher)

Despite the fact that the staff reviewed the data at the beginning of the year and brainstormed ways to support well-being as a staff, there appeared to be a lack of knowledge about the specific ways the GSP drove interventions after that meeting. This is likely due to the fact that the task of developing targeted interventions based on the GSP data was delegated to the leadership team, which was comprised of four teachers, one from each teaching team. The leadership team's focus is on developing ways to implement the school district's strategic plan initiatives, one of which was called "Goal 2" and was focused on improving student well-being.

The previous year, the leadership team developed school-wide, multi-grade seminar classes that met a few times each quarter to "do activities...to help with...bonding and just other things about the whole child" (seventh grade teacher). A sixth grade teacher explained the value of the intervention in terms of promoting social awareness of others: "It allows us to have some different opinions from the older kids and the younger kids and mingle among one another to see some behaviors, some learning styles, lots of good mixture there so that the kids can be exposed to [each other]." Another eighth grade teacher said,

What we're trying to do is build that [seminar] time around hope, engagement, and well-being issues...This year we read *How Full is Your Bucket?* and so we tried to incorporate things about bucket-filling [e.g., telling a classmate what they appreciated about them].

We did the PowerPoint of the book with the kids, and then some of the anti-bullying assemblies we've had we've tried to pull in those themes with our small groups.

The leadership team also used the GSP data to identify and target low scoring items, such as “In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork” (see Appendix B). After having a discussion about different ways people prefer to be recognized, the leadership team asked the seminar teachers to explore the topic with their seminar students because “we just wanted to get a feel for what they consider to be actual recognition” (sixth grade). One teacher was surprised to learn that her students preferred stickers as a form of praise. She said, “[that was] something I never thought of. I don’t even have stickers in my desk. But they said they would really like a sticker” (sixth grade). Members of the leadership team said they were planning to look at the GSP data again at the end of the year to inform decisions they made about the structure and content of the seminars the following year.

Although many teachers pointed out the positive aspects of the seminar groups, some teachers questioned the effectiveness of the intervention. During the focus group with sixth grade teachers, it became apparent that inequity in class sizes and difficult mixtures of student personalities were points of contention. One sixth grade teacher went so far as to question the level of forethought put into determining the make-up of the student groups, saying, “I’m not trying to be negative Nelly here, but how were the [seminar groups] assigned? Like was it just random?” The discrepancy of class size and “lack of strong student leaders” seem to create obstacles for some staff members that they felt were difficult to overcome.

Perceptions of school interventions that influence hope, engagement, and well-being.

The following sections describe the teachers’ perceptions of how their school addresses student hope, engagement, and well-being. Two general strategies were identified as perceived ways the school influences all three constructs: (a) building positive relationships with students; and (b)

creating a positive, supportive atmosphere. These strategies are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Building relationships with students. All of the faculty members interviewed at Wooded Lake Middle School commented on the importance of building relationships with students as a way to impact their hope, engagement, and well-being. From the office staff, who knew students by name and asked them about their day, to the principal, who greeted students by name in the hallways and asked them how their basketball game went or what they were going to do over the weekend, connecting to students on a personal level was evident as a common practice in this school. Almost all teachers were in the hallways during the passing periods talking to students as they moved to their next class. One eighth grade teacher explained, “I try to stand by the door and greet kids by name every day, every time they walk in the room, realizing that that might be the only time all day long that I say ‘hi,’ that I talk to them, or that the other teacher even says their name or something. So just that, even look them in the eye, say ‘good morning,’ [I] just try to do that as much as I can.”

Some teachers “every day take two or three new students and talk to them about something that has nothing to do with school or class” (Explo teacher) while others will have lunch with students several times during the week. Most of the teachers emphasized having one-on-one conversations with students because “when the student sees the time you’re spending just to talk, just with them, without messing around with the computer, or making a list, or all the things we’re guilty of doing a lot, but just to listen to them and talk with them can make just an enormous difference” (seventh grade teacher). One Explo teacher said, “It’s amazing the things that they’ll say, the things that they’ll open up about at lunch...It’s 25 minutes of my time. I mean, really in the long run, what is that? And it, you know, does it makes a huge difference for

them.” In addition to the individual teacher efforts to connect with students, the school has “guided study” groups, small classes (e.g., four to nine students) of at-risk students who meet daily with a teacher, which helps students “to really be able to build relationships with teachers” (eighth grade teacher). One teacher summed it up this way: “I really think the staff cares about kids and through that I hope the kids feel like we are hopeful for them” (eighth grade teacher).

The educators’ efforts to get to know students appear to be working, as 91% of students said they had an adult at school who cared about them (Gallup, 2010b). As an example, another eighth grade teacher shared, “We had a new student just start [school here], and he said at his old school none of his teachers smiled or even knew his name, and his grades were D’s and F’s. I think since he’s been here, even though he’s not a great, great student, I feel like he has more hope in the last few days to what he’s going to accomplish than he did...before he came here.” Another student had been suicidal and “our principal worked with him and I worked with him and, um, he felt like he could be safe in PE. So we gave him the opportunity to say that if you’re going through your day and you’re having a rough time and something’s going on and you need help, come down and see us immediately. Know that this is a refuge for you. You can come here any time” (Explo teacher).

Those stories exemplify the collective approach to building hope in students by connecting with them on a personal level and communicating care and a desire to help them succeed at school. As a sixth grade teacher remarked: “I think that the teachers do a good job instilling hope as far as their academic performance goes...sometimes kids maybe have not had some academic success in the past, but they come here and they feel like, ‘You know, this teacher will work with me and I can be successful in this classroom.’”

Creating a positive, supportive atmosphere. Another factor that teachers identified as a key to fostering hope and well-being was having a positive, supportive atmosphere in the building. “I think we do what we can to try to make them feel safe, as part of that, too. Just that, the kids who might not have a great home life or something, we help them out” (eighth grade teacher). According to the principal, even the school building was designed to maximize student safety, with the hallways built at angles going off the main hallway so that teachers could stand in the atrium and monitor students as they moved between classes simply by looking to their left and right. Each classroom had a window to the hallway, which allowed one to observe what was happening in the classroom.

As I looked through the window in one classroom, I noticed a math teacher had replaced traditional student seats with large exercise balls, which the principal said students enjoyed using and helped them stay engaged in math class. To add to the inviting atmosphere, the walls were painted bright colors and prominently displayed posters and student work lined the hallways. In one hallway, each ceiling tile had been hand-painted by an eighth grade student, which the principal explained was a tradition that the students looked forward to in order to leave their mark on the school. In the cafeteria, I noticed a wall of colorful handprints with student names written on them. The principal explained that since the school opened 10 years ago, each incoming class of sixth graders had put a handprint on the wall and signed it. The principal said it helped create a sense of student ownership in the school and build a positive school climate, citing numerous alumni who would come back and look for their handprint on the wall years later.

The principal said he had tried to create a place that students felt comfortable coming to and wanting to learn. To that end, he had initiated a Frank Sinatra Friday and he would play a

Frank Sinatra song over the intercom and dance with the students at lunch. His efforts also carried over to the teacher work areas, where he had displayed signs that read “Let no one EVER come to you without leaving BETTER and HAPPIER – Mother Theresa”, and “How full is your bucket?”.

The teachers interviewed said the positive and supportive environment at Wooded Lake Middle School was one factor that fostered the development of agency in students. For example, “We’ve seen kids maybe who maybe came from elementary school and didn’t feel successful or didn’t want to try, but are more open to trying and working hard here than [there]...because I think there is an atmosphere like, ‘You can do this’” (sixth grade teacher). One way teachers tried to build hope in their students was to “recognize their abilities instead of focusing on what they can’t do...we really do try to focus on what they can do” (eighth grade teacher). Teachers at all grade levels said encouraging students and leveraging their students’ successes, “even if it’s just in one small area,” gave students a sense of hope and help them realize “‘If I can do this, when I struggled before, then I can do anything’” (seventh grade teacher).

Building relationships with students and creating a positive, supportive atmosphere at school were highlighted as key factors that elevate student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. In addition, the teachers described other practices that their school did which they perceived had specific hope-boosting effects: (a) providing a variety of academic support resources, (b) collaborating to problem solve around obstacles to student success, (c) connecting learning to relevant future goals, (d) modeling hope, (e) telling hope stories, and (f) encouraging students to give hope to others. These practices will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Providing a variety of academic support resources. One key to hope development that was identified by teachers in all of the focus groups was providing multiple resources, or pathways, to help students succeed at school. The school offered a variety of specific intervention programs, such as READ 180 for students who struggle with reading, a math guided study, even a person to help students get organized at the beginning and end of the day. Additionally, some staff members provided free tutoring in the library for an hour each day after school, and all teachers were available to students for extra help before and after school. The school's homework policy allowed students to redo assignments and had a mastery focus: "[Students] get to do it again so there's still hope [they] can master this concept and move on" (sixth grade). Even for students who forget to turn in homework, they get three chances to turn it in for credit. While some teachers felt that the homework policy was too lenient and did not allow students to learn from their failure, another teacher said, "We do some handholding and things like that around here, but I think that, at least from my opinion, we do a lot of problem solving. 'How can you get around this?' You know, 'What are you gonna...what are your options?'" (Explo teacher). What was clear was that the school did provide a variety of academic resources to help students succeed at school, and while over half of the students indicated they could think of many ways to get good grades (66%), about a third of students said they could not think of multiple pathways to academic success (Gallup, 2010b).

Collaborating to problem-solve around obstacles to student success. One hope-boosting intervention that each group of teachers referred to was a weekly grade-level problem-solving team meeting. During the meetings, the teachers meet with the administrators and counselors to talk about students who are struggling academically or socially and "we work as a team to make sure we know what to do to give that kid hope that he's successful" (sixth grade teacher). For

example, if a student's grades have dropped, and they also seem to be struggling with their friends, "We will have [the student] come in and talk to them, or [have] their parents come in and talk to them, or hook someone up [with a teacher], you know, 'Hey, you get along really good with _____. Can you talk to 'em?' Or the counselor? You try to use a lot of different strategies to help individual students with their individual needs" (eighth grade teacher). One sixth grade teacher described how the problem-solving teams would "think outside the box and not let the constraints of the school schedule or the staffing" get in the way of "focusing on what's best for that individual student." An Explo teacher also spoke to the benefit of having a counselor present at the problem-solving meetings: "There's so many times when you may be having a problem with a child in class that maybe you've not had the problem behavior before, and the communication that we have with their counselors when they have or know about a problem that a student has...they let you know about it so that you are either forewarned or you can react to that student in an appropriate manner, differently than you may on a regular class day."

Another teacher described how teachers eliminated barriers to a student's success in one class by relying on other staff members to celebrate that student's success in their classes. One seventh grade teacher explained the importance of helping students have small successes in any area at school as a way to boost hope in struggling students:

If you're failing academically and you don't think you're ever going to be able to do that [task], I think that shuts down that hope. So if we can tell them, show them even small successes in the classroom...I mean, I'm just thinking about us even as adults. If we're in a situation where we don't feel like we're being successful, it shuts down all those positive feelings. But if you can start seeing, 'Oh, I'm successful in this' or 'I'm

successful in that'...if kids that aren't being successful in the classroom, maybe they're excelling on the basketball court, and so that [success] gives them hope." (seventh grade)

To illustrate the impact that collaboration across disciplines can have on student hope, an Explo teacher said a grade level team had approached her and said, " 'Hey, [this student] is really struggling up here in math and science, social studies. But I hear that they're really doing a good job in your class. You know, you need to celebrate that with that student and really help them feel successful.' " Having the time to meet weekly and problem-solve student issues was perceived by teachers as a critical way they could impact student hope levels and academic success.

Connecting learning to relevant future goals. Another aspect of engendering hope in students is connecting their learning to relevant future goals. Some teachers pointed out that developmentally, the students are in a transition from concrete to more abstract thought, and "it's hard for them to see the big picture of things, and when you say 'hope,' you know, they're hoping they can go to the movie over the weekend; that's about as broad as their hope gets" (seventh grade teacher). However, another seventh grade teacher responded, "Even if it's about their hope for the near future, it's still hope, and I think it starts with them feeling good, like they can achieve anything." One teacher argued that engendering a future focus in students "can engage hope because if they can actually see there's...more to my life than just what happens in seventh grade, it actually will help me because I really want to do this someday, or I really want to do that" (seventh grade teacher).

To that end, an Explo teacher said some of his team members had purposefully been trying to "attach [students'] learning now to things in the future" by "showing them there's more, more to what they're doing right now that's going to be useful later on." For example, the high

school band and debate team came to the middle school to expose students to “things they’re going to be able to take advantage of in the future like high school activities” (Explo teacher). Many of the teachers said they were aware of the link between hope and academic achievement, and one teacher elaborated on the importance of future thinking in nurturing hope in students: “I think if they are able to see where this all goes, I think as far as academically, if they can make a connection between ‘how I am doing now’ and ‘how I’m learning how to solve problems and be faced with more difficult tasks’ that ‘that’s going to be my ticket to doing well in high school’” (seventh grade teacher).

Modeling hope. In addition to the factors that promote hope already mentioned, the some teachers interviewed said that modeling hopeful behavior for their students was just as important. “I think their hope comes from us. If we say that we believe in them and that we are positive towards them...and their success, that’s what drives their hope now...it’s just that pass it on effect...it really starts with the teachers” (seventh grade teacher). Another teacher shared that even when students present ongoing challenges “and you feel like giving up, but you just...we don’t. And I think that’s consistent with our whole team. We never give up on them, and I think that instills hope in our kids” (sixth grade teacher). While aiming to persist in hope appears to be a goal among teachers, one seventh grade teacher described how she believes teachers can boost their own hope:

You’ve got to look at what makes you happy. What makes...gives you hope? And the same thing that gives you hope and makes you happy is probably going to do the same for others. And most people...want to be listened to. They want to be noticed. It’s those little things. And if that gives you hope, it’s definitely going to do the same for your students, too.

In other words, these teachers advocated for being hopeful themselves in order to “give hope” to their students.

Telling hope stories. While modeling hopeful behavior is one way to promote hope, another more tangible method is to “do some assemblies where the kids have the opportunity to see those situations where hope exists” (sixth grade teacher). For instance, the school brought in students who had survived car accidents who had “overcome problems and become very successful even though they may have things in their life that they feel...might hold them back” (Explo teacher). At the time of the site visit, the students had just heard a guest speaker from, “Love Is Louder,” a non-profit national program that promotes using words to leave messages of support and inspiration in their schools as a way to combat negativity and bullying. The students had posted positive messages on the walls all over the building, and many teachers referred to the program as something that “shows them there is hope” (eighth grade teacher).

Encouraging students to give hope to others. The teachers also said they believed their efforts to prompt students to give hope to others builds hope in students. For example, a student had surgery and “everybody wore the same t-shirt [and] we sent pictures to him; that was hope for him” (sixth grade teacher). The students also raised \$10,000 to help a fellow student who has muscular dystrophy get a motorized automobile lift. The school also had an active community service club, and 40% of students surveyed in the GSP said they had volunteered in the last month (Gallup, 2010b). The seminar classes read the book *How Full is Your Bucket?* and taught students about bucket filling (i.e., positive interactions) and bucket dipping (i.e., negative interactions). The students and staff wrote things they were grateful for or appreciated about a person on a paper “drop,” and then gave it to the person as a way to “fill their bucket.” Many of

the teachers commented on the positive impact the bucket-filling activities had on the students.

One teacher said:

I think if we really truly look at what it can accomplish, you know, kids need to have hope, and when we talk about hope, I think they're starting to see that "Hey, maybe someone out there might give me a 'Hey, how are you today?'" or might ask me to sit at their table." I mean, obviously it's not going to be perfect. But if they're aware of it, and they're aware they can make a difference, it can make our building better. (Explo teacher)

Overall, it was clear that teachers were deliberately trying to increase hope in their students through direct and indirect means. As an eighth grade teacher said, "We want them to be hopeful. We want them to see their abilities. We want them to know that they're worth something to us and to themselves. We're trying to teach them that they're representing who they are and to look to the future and know that everybody can find something. And we really try to do that through counselors and through our guided studies and through the assemblies, and just in interaction with our kids in the classroom." The data from the GSP confirmed that their efforts are working for some students, as 70% are hopeful and only 9% are discouraged.

In addition to building relationships with students, as discussed in an earlier section, the teachers and principals described two other ways their school enhanced student engagement: (a) by using effective instructional strategies and (b) offering numerous, structured extracurricular activities and encouraging students to participate. Each will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Using effective instructional strategies. To facilitate engagement in the classroom, teachers said, "We use a variety of teaching techniques. I know we all incorporate different things in the classroom so that kids can get engaged and reach the different needs of all the

different students” (eighth grade). Some teachers said their assignments were cooperative learning projects, which encouraged students to work together to achieve a common goal. A seventh grade teacher remarked, “We’re way past that point where the teacher stands in front of a group of kids and talks at them. It’s all about facilitating the participation in the group and getting them actively involved in learning so they are engaged in the lesson.” For example, two eighth grade teachers asked their students to work in groups to investigate a problem and create a project to display the findings. One of the teachers involved in the project explained, “We’re trying to give them more ownership in what they are going to produce for us. We’ve given them what the expectations are—the learning targets—how they get there. And it is chaos and kind of a big mess right now, but they’re very engaged and excited about it and they’re talking about it in the halls.”

Other teachers pointed out that the instructors have adapted to the ever-evolving world of technology and tried to make the learning relevant to the students. A seventh grade teacher explained that engaging students required teachers to be “flexible...it’s getting into [the students’] world, and when their world is constantly changing, we as teachers have to constantly be willing to be flexible and adapt to that need. ‘Cause if we’re not doing that, then they’re not engaged.” Although technological advances may create obstacles for the teachers because “it’s hard for us to learn—keep up with what [the students] know,” many of the school’s teachers embraced the challenge to “learn what’s really out there...and give [the students] different web 2.0 tools to show what they know” (seventh grade teacher). By assessing students through various technological means instead of traditional paper-and-pencil tests, “that’s one huge way the kids are staying engaged” (seventh grade teacher). The school schedule also allowed for

teachers to meet in professional learning communities an hour three times a week to collaborate and enhance their teaching practices.

Offering numerous, structured extracurricular activities and encouraging students to participate. When asked what practices they thought improved student engagement, that is, involvement in and enthusiasm for school, every group of teachers mentioned their extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The principal said that helping students get involved at school was important to him, and other teachers agreed. “I think it’s great, too...the principal has always said he wants kids in this building as much as possible—before school, after school—he wants activities going on in this building all the time. And...I think kids form a connection to the building, a lot of them” (sixth grade teacher). The school offered an impressive array of clubs based on student interest, including robotics, hip hop, math, computer, field games, yearbook, art, diversity, knitting, MineCraft computer game, running, and Spanish. Some teachers had lunch with students in their classrooms, and the counselors conducted small groups during lunch where struggling students could connect with each other and get support. The drama teacher also put on a school play, which was open to all students: “There’ll be 100 kids on stage, literally. I mean, if you want to be in the play, then you just need to sign up” (sixth grade teacher). The school also advertised the various ways for students to get involved. Next to the counseling office, a bulletin board was covered with announcements about upcoming events, community service opportunities, and intramural activities, including pictures of the students participating in the clubs and sports.

As a collective, it was clear that the staff was committed to providing “as many opportunities as possible, whether it’s [seminar classes] or in your guided studies class, or it’s a subject you’re interested in, or it’s sports, or something else that you have a connection with a

staff member, or you start building some of that school spirit a little bit about, you know, ‘I play for the football team.’ And that’s cool. I think that helps drive everything if you get them to buy into the school” (seventh grade teacher). In fact, an Explo teacher said in years past “one of our learning targets, our goals, was to try to gather data and see if every kid in the school was engaged in something...not just academic engagement, but engaged in the community, the school.” And while the school did place a large emphasis on “trying to get kids involved, so that all kids are involved,” an eighth grade teacher pointed out their efforts can take a toll on teachers: “I feel like at this school, sometimes to our fault, we are involved with every aspect of their lives....I probably know more about some of my students than I do about my own children, at times I feel that way.” A few of the other teachers mentioned the burden of the time involved to sponsor structured extracurricular activities, but most of the teachers said they valued the clubs and sports as important practices for engaging students in school.

In terms of specific practices targeting well-being, teachers identified the seminar classes that emphasized well-being, building relationships with students, and having a positive school atmosphere as important practices. Additionally, the teachers said they tried to foster positive peer relationships, and communicate clear expectations with consistent consequences. Lastly, many teachers commented on the importance of maintaining their own well-being because it “trickles down” and impacts the students’ sense of well-being. While some interventions have been discussed earlier in this chapter (i.e., seminar classes, building relationships, positive atmosphere), the remaining practices are discussed in detail in the next section.

Fostering positive peer relationships. Reports of student behavior toward each other were mixed, with some teachers describing students that “go out of their way to, like, respect...other kids” (seventh grade teacher), and others saying, “We are just appalled at times at

how high-stakes the comments [by students] are, the teasing, the bullying, the physical things that even go on with them” (eighth grade teacher). It is important to note, however, that only the eighth grade teachers commented on the negative peer relationships among their students. One eighth grade teacher even acknowledged their bias and said, “it’s a stark contrast to the other, to last year’s eighth graders or this year’s sixth or seventh graders...that respect. And it’s a stark contrast in the district, even, this group of students.” When discussing the eighth graders, another teacher pointed out “this is a really challenging, high needs group that on the Gallup data, it’s just amazing how they stand out with the lack of problem-solving skills, their lack of respect for each other, and the feeling of respect. So I think we see and deal with that on a daily basis from them” (eighth grade teacher). The eighth grade teachers were clearly frustrated and disappointed with their students’ disrespectful attitudes, as exemplified by one teacher’s comment: “I don’t know if they even know what respect is or how to do it.”

The eighth grade teachers said they had been emphasizing respect with their students all year, and pointed to modeling respectful behavior themselves as one intervention that seemed to have some success: “[We] really tried to show what it means to respect one another as adults as well as show them that we respect them and what we expect in return.” Modeling respect was not limited to eighth grade teachers, but others described respecting each other as a strategy for improving student well-being. A sixth grade teacher said, “When they see us kind of joking around with each other and having fun and enjoying our work...that translates to the kids that if we’re having fun, then they have fun, and they treat each other and us with the same respect that they see us treating each other.” Additionally, sixth grade teachers took an approach that directly intervened when they saw students disrespecting each other, “We say, ‘Hey, maybe there’s a better way to say that. Maybe you could respond a little differently.’ So they don’t get

away with smarting off or being rude to, not just us, but to one another. We'll call them [on it] in the halls, 'Don't speak that way.'”

Another way that the school tried to target student well-being was through their counselors. The counselors were available to students for individual support; however, they also offered two groups, one for boys and one for girls, to help students “who need some more coaching and socialization” (sixth grade). A seventh grade teacher reflected on the assemblies and bucket-filling activities described earlier as ways the “school has created an environment where it’s cool [for students] to respect each other... ‘cause they see the positiveness [sic] that it’s created.” While the school made some efforts to promote positive peer relationships, the principal acknowledged that bullying was a problem at the school. Indeed, nearly a quarter of the students surveyed (23%) said they did not feel respected at school (Gallup, 2010b).

Communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences. When asked about what promotes students’ well-being at school, the sixth grade teachers in particular emphasized the importance of having clear expectations and communicating those to the students. One sixth grade teacher remarked on the importance of explicitly teaching expectations because “we might be the first people teaching them when they might not get it at home.” Another teacher said she thought it was important to “be able to approach a student and say, ‘This is what I really expect out of you and here’s what I want you to expect out of me’” (sixth grade teacher).

Conveying clear expectations was one part of a classroom management and discipline strategy implemented at the sixth grade level called “Give ‘Em Five.” The assistant principal explained that it involved “reframing” how a teacher talks to a student about problematic behavior through a five-step process, by “recognizing something positive about them, explaining what the breakdown [in behavior] is, what the expectations are, and then getting on the path that

will get you where you want them to be.” According to a handout on the strategy, confronting a student’s negative behavior involves these five steps: (1) use a supportive statement, (2) describe the expectation breakdown, (3) describe the expectation, (4) identify the benefit of meeting the expectation, and (5) provide closure in the form of agreement, commitment, and effort toward the expectation. A sixth grade teacher felt that this approach to discipline was not punitive, but rather “helped kids figure out those problem-solving strategies and explained why it’s important for them to do that.” Another teacher who had implemented the Give ‘Em Five approach said she appreciated the fact that all the teachers on her team were using the same language when disciplining students. She gave an example of a conversation she had with a student who had not done his homework for several days: “This is what I need for you to do is complete your homework, and you’re not doing that, so what can we do to support you in achieving this goal? How can you get there and how can I support you in doing that?” (sixth grade teacher). The Give ‘Em Five strategy had not yet been implemented at all grade levels, so it is possible that the discrepancy in teachers’ perceptions of student behavior could be, at least in part, a result of one grade level using a different classroom management strategy to deal with negative student behaviors.

Enhancing staff well-being to improve student well-being. The last practice that teachers perceived as a well-being boost was indirectly related to students and instead involved enhancing the teachers’ well-being at school. At the end of the previous school year, the principal asked the staff to provide reflections about the seminar classes that had been developed to enhance student well-being. As he read through the staff reflections, the principal said he became aware of a pervasive sense of isolation and loneliness. He realized that the staff didn’t know each other, even though they saw each other every day. He said it was important for

teachers to feel positive about being at school because it impacted how they interacted with students. He felt that one way he could make a difference was through encouraging staff to get to know each other better. So, he made several strategic moves, some subtle (e.g., eating lunch with his faculty members to get to know them better) and others overt (e.g., rearranging teaching assignments), to get people to interact more.

The principal also created multidisciplinary teams of teachers for the express purpose of promoting connections among staff members. He tasked the teams with developing fun, 15-minute activities to start faculty meetings. For instance, he showed me a picture of staff members balancing dice on a tongue dispenser they were holding with their teeth as part of a series of “Minute to Win It” challenges. Another time the staff had a scavenger hunt by teams, but they could only communicate with each other by making animal noises. As he relayed the story of staff members making various animal sounds in the library, he began to laugh, and it was evident that the principal valued playful activities as much as the serious business of teaching. The principal said he wanted to provide a space for staff to get to know each other and have fun because it made the staff more cohesive and more productive as a unit. And his efforts seemed to be working. One seventh grade teacher said:

Our little [staff] groups and our activities that we’ve done, they might have seemed silly, but I think we’ve had the most togetherness as far as staff doing those little activities, whether it’s making Valentines or playing a game...it’s been well worth the time that it’s spent on because we’ve gotten to be with a different group of people...learned some things about others that we might not have known before...it kind of puts us a little more at ease with each other.

Further evidence of staff camaraderie was displayed in their interactions with one another during the focus group interviews. The staff seemed genuinely to like each other, and even when they disagreed with each other or expressed their frustration in the meetings, they still respected each other's viewpoints and, in most instances, offered support to one another. It was clear that the teachers bought into the idea that "teachers have to get along as well, and have to show that there's a camaraderie between us, and that trickles down to the students" (sixth grade teacher). While there is room for improvement, at least some of their efforts to enhance student well-being appear to be working as reflected in their students' GSP scores: 76% of students were in the thriving category on the Well-being Index (Gallup, 2010b).

Perceptions of factors that affect the school's intervention efforts. As with the previous case study, the perceived factors that potentially affect the school's intervention efforts, either positively or negatively, are discussed in this section. The factors are organized in terms of individual, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems.

Individual student characteristics. In general, most teachers described their students as "works in progress" and "in all different places" on a continuum of human development, implying that because the students were in various stages of development, it made their efforts to teach students challenging. Several teachers pointed to variability in students' maturity levels as something that influenced their work with students. Many teachers also commented on their students' limited ability to think about the future:

I think our frustration lies in the fact that the kids at this point in their lives in the middle school time, they don't realize what they're future holds. I mean, when you talk to them about 'You'll need this information for college' or 'You'll need this information for high school,' they think of tomorrow as opposed to future. It's very difficult at this point

because they don't see a future, they don't see college, they don't see...they see tomorrow. (eighth grade teacher)

While educators commented on their students difficulties with following through, the eighth grade educators, in particular, appeared to have a collective belief that part of the reason interventions worked with some students and not with others had to do with the students' attitudes toward learning: "This group doesn't...they don't take responsibility for anything, and work-wise, they won't do the work. They don't really care, and then they wonder why their grades are bad" (eighth grade teacher). Other teachers attributed some students' disengagement to an external locus of control and sense of helplessness: "I don't think they understand that they have control over things they do have control over, so it's everything [*sic*] else's fault, or it's just all outside of them. They don't see what power they do have" (eighth grade). The teachers also commented on their students' motivation level (or lack thereof) as a factor that influenced their ability to engage students in learning: "I feel like these kids really lack any initiative to do anything by themselves. They're just, 'Tell me what to do and I'll do it, but please don't make me think independently'" (eighth grade teacher). In the eighth grade team, especially, teachers had a view that there were inherent student characteristics (e.g., developmental maturity, orientation toward time, attitudes, locus of control, and motivation) that teachers had little control over which impacted the school's intervention effectiveness. Not all of the teachers, however, bought into the idea that teachers had limited influence on students' attitudes towards school. One teacher commented, "I think sometimes we assume that [the students] have learned responsibility, but then start to realize that wait, we need...we might be the first people teaching them when they might not get it at home" (Explo teacher). Even so, a large number of educators

commented that certain student characteristics were necessary for students to be successful and ready for the future.

Microsystem factors. While building teacher-student relationships appears to be a key intervention to build hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students, the educators interviewed mentioned a couple of obstacles to building those relationships at school. One was the relentless pressure teachers feel to teach content in order to boost achievement test scores.

As one seventh grade educator put it:

We feel so pressured and we're trying to get everything done and we've got to get tests done or we've got to get through this because we've got this coming up and so on. But every once in a while you just have to say, 'Okay, whoa, stop,' and just kind of sit and listen to what they have to say. Do something fun where you can just wander around and listen to what they have to say and what they're thinking.

Another seventh grade teacher said, "I feel like I'm guilty of that, too, just wanting to make those personal connections and striving to have an impact on students, but then in the back of my mind it's always the assessments kind of beaconing and reminding me that that's also a priority."

While on the surface the high-stakes testing pressure may seem to fall only on the shoulders of the core subject area teachers, in this school the Explo teachers also mentioned the impact it has on their practice. One physical education teacher said, "We are always so busy and so about teaching, what we get to teach, that I find if I would just stop for 30 seconds and take a basketball and catch a shot or something from a kid that's shooting, they light up."

The other factor that some teachers mentioned as a hindrance to making connections with students is class size. The eighth grade class in this school was larger than the other two grades, and each class had 30 to 34 students. As one teacher exclaimed in frustration, "If I could just get

one individually and spend enough time with just that one kid, no matter who they are, I do think I could make a lot of difference. But that's just not practical" (eighth grade teacher). Thus the teachers held that certain school factors (e.g., pressure to perform well on high-stakes tests and larger class sizes) had a negative impact on their ability to form relationships with their students, therefore indirectly impacting students' hope, engagement, and well-being levels.

Mesosystem factors. The primary mesosystem level interaction discussed by teachers was their relationship with students' parents. While the educators were in agreement that parental involvement in their students' education was important, the level of perceived parental involvement was described as a moderating factor for student engagement:

It varies class to class depending on how much the parents are involved. Some classes the parents are very involved and...and you feel like you can get [the students] ready...and sometimes parents are over-involved and you can't get the kids ready because [the parents are] always in rescuing, rescuing them. (eighth grade teacher)

Parental over-involvement was viewed by some as a barrier to students learning how to be autonomous and competent, which impacted a student's engagement in school. In other cases, with students that "don't really seem to care," teachers described parents who:

...act like they care, but the parents themselves don't have any follow through. So it's really difficult to, for us to do our job and try to get follow through [from the student]. The parents talk the good talk and respond, send us emails, say[ing], 'My kid's gonna be...they'll be...they'll see you Monday morning.' [We] never see them, so it's really difficult because the kid, the parent, they're separate entities and then we're just a separate piece too. (eighth grade teacher).

Support from parents was regarded as important by the teachers; when it was too much or not enough, the teachers believed it had a negative impact on their students' engagement.

Exosystem factors. The teachers' attitudes toward the stakeholders at the school (e.g., administrators and students) seemed to influence the school's efforts to boost student hope, engagement, and well-being. Regarding the school's administration, the teachers were in agreement that administrative support was essential to any intervention's success: "I think that it's really important to have the support of your administration. 'Cause if they don't support you in all these things that we do and try to do differently for kids, then it's not going to get done" (eighth grade teacher). The staff seemed to buy into the principal's focus on student well-being, and the teachers seemed to respond well to their leadership's commitment to "just talk about hope, well-being, and engagement" once a month (seventh grade teacher). In general, they spoke positively about the leadership at the school.

The teachers may have felt positive about their administrators, but 29 teachers said they felt uncertain or pessimistic when they thought about their students' readiness for the future, whereas only nine teachers said they felt optimistic. Educators' attitudes towards students can certainly influence their interactions with students, and just as positive attitudes promote healthy interactions, negative views can be obstacles to improvement. Several eighth grade teachers openly admitted "our minds are really skewed this year" and "I feel like we sound so negative and hopeless about this group," but they attributed their pessimism to the "group of students we have this year." Some eighth grade teachers felt that the students were not responding to their efforts to help them: "We problem solve about the same kids over and over and over again because they can't take control or they can't take care of things on their own and...so it kind of falls to us." Others described their frustration as a result of a mismatch between the educator's

expectations and the students' actual efforts: "We see the potential and the hope of these kids, and we've put in probably more work this year, and that really stresses us out, but it's because they can do it, and we feel like we can make that difference, it's just taking so long" (eighth grade teacher). The pervasive sense among the eighth grade team was one of stress and negativity, which may have influenced the effectiveness of their interventions with students.

Macrosystem factors. Some of the teachers in this school mentioned the impact the location of the school and resources available to the student may have had on their efforts to help students be more hopeful, engaged, and have higher well-being. As one Explo teacher explained, "We don't have the huge behavior problems you may have in the inner city...places where kids have no family support....The kids [here] come from a nice enough socioeconomic level that , in general, they've got more feeling family and things to do." The school was situated in a wealthy suburb, and the majority of the students who attended the school came from a privileged background. It is likely that having a clean, relatively new building with extensive resources and substantial community backing made implementing some interventions at the school level easier than it would be in areas with high levels of poverty and fewer resources. However, it is impossible to draw any causal conclusions based on the data in this study.

Sheridan Bridge Middle School

The findings from this case are drawn from a combination of four separate focus group interviews with teachers, field notes taken during the guided tour conducted by the school's assistant principal on April 3, 2012, the students' responses to the GSP in the fall of 2010, and the researcher's reflexive journal notes. Qualitative and quantitative data were compared and clustered into groups according to common themes. Results are described in the following narrative summary.

GSP results. Sheridan Bridge Middle School (SBMS) was also selected from among middle schools in the upper quartile of the RFI surveyed in the fall of 2010. Of its students, 48% were hopeful, engaged, and thriving. According to the results of the GSP taken by students in the fall of 2010 (see Table 5), 65% of the students were hopeful, while 26% were stuck and 9% discouraged. Sixty-eight percent of the students felt engaged at school, 24% were disengaged, and 8% were actively disengaged. And on the Well-Being Index, 78% of the students were thriving, 22% were struggling, and no students were suffering (Gallup, 2010b).

Use of the Gallup Student Poll data. The majority of the teachers at this school either did not know what the GSP was or had it confused with other tests they had administered during the year. A few teachers did know what the GSP was, but said they had not seen the data this year. Four teachers mentioned that two years before, the school had made a concerted effort to build relationships and make connections to individual students based on student responses to a question on a survey that asked, “if the students felt they had an adult that they could talk to [at school]” (Explo teacher). The teachers said they targeted specific students based on their responses to that question. However, it was unclear whether that measure was the GSP or a different survey. Given that the GSP does not report results of individual students’ responses to schools, it is unlikely that the GSP was the measure in question. Thus, the staff had limited knowledge of the GSP data and, for those who knew about the measure, it was unclear whether or how the school had used the data.

Perceptions of school interventions that influence hope, engagement, and well-being. The following sections describe the teachers’ perceptions about how their school addresses student hope, engagement, and well-being. Three general strategies were identified as perceived ways the school influences all three constructs: (a) building positive relationships with students;

Table 5: Fall 2010 GSP Data for SBMS and the National Cohort Samples

	SBMS	National
<i>Hope Index</i>	(n = 361)	(N = 249,819)
% Hopeful	65	53
% Stuck	26	31
% Discouraged	9	16
Grand Mean (out of 5)	4.51	4.39
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I know I will graduate from high school.	4.82	4.74
There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.	4.83	4.76
I can think of many ways to get good grades.	4.54	4.33
I energetically pursue my goals.	4.24	4.14
I can find of lots of ways around any problem.	4.04	3.85
I know I will find a good job after I graduate.	4.54	4.43
<i>Engagement Index</i>	(n = 363)	(N = 252, 427)
% Engaged	68	57
% Not Engaged	24	26
% Actively Disengaged	8	17
GrandMean (out of 5)	4.26	4.06
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)		
I have a best friend at school.	4.62	4.49
I feel safe in this school.	4.42	4.03
My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	4.33	4.16
At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	4.19	3.99
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	3.71	3.58
<i>Wellbeing Index</i>	(n = 375)	(N = 266971)
% Thriving	78	65
% Struggling	22	33
% Suffering	0	2
GrandMean (out of 10)	8.75	8.51
<i>Readiness for the Future Index</i>	48	34

Note: Readiness for the Future Index is the percent of students who scored in the top categories of the three indices (hopeful, engaged, thriving).

(b) collaborating to problem-solve around obstacles to student success; and (c) providing a variety of support resources. These strategies are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Building positive relationships with students. The educators in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades commented on the need to form positive relationships with students. A seventh grade teacher explained, “I think the kids are willing to try if there’s somebody that’s willing to listen.” Another teacher commented on the importance of relationship building for getting students engaged in school and building hope: “I think that why we [build relationships] is because that’s the one way we can make the best difference...if we can make connections, somehow, whether sports, or coaching, or just getting to know those kids. That’s how they change their level of hope and engagement” (eighth grade). In addition to their personal beliefs, it was clear that the principal also emphasized making connections with students: “Our administration’s always been big on building relationships with kids. We hear that term all of the time about how important it is” (sixth grade teacher). Another teacher described spending time in professional learning communities reading a book called *Whatever It Takes* and the administration said: “we need to do whatever it takes, whether it’s building relationships, or opening up that much time with them. And I think that that’s a big part of our school. I mean if some teachers saw how many kids were in here [working with teachers] until late at night, they would think we were lunatics” (sixth grade teacher). An eighth grade teacher said their conversations about how to get every student to say they have an adult they can go to “help[s] us to make sure there’s no kids who fall through the cracks.”

Others described the process of building a relationship and “getting them to trust you” (seventh grade teacher). An eighth grade teacher said, “It starts with being a presence outside of the classroom” and talking to students, “and when they know that you’re interested, they’re willing to open up and tell you more.” Another teacher described getting to know a student because “she was just a crazy baseball fan...she liked to come by and talk about baseball, and it

had nothing to do with math or anything, but, you know, that was a good, easy way to make a connection with her...I think that's how they make strides" (eighth grade teacher). The same teacher also commented on the importance of treating the student with respect because "if they know that they're going to be on somewhat equal ground with you, at least in terms of respect, then I think that really helps them to be able to let you into their world a little bit" (eighth grade teacher). The teachers also said the conversations needed to be authentic: "To be able to have candid, appropriate conversations and share about yourself and you know experiences that you've been through, relating with kids, and building that relationship I guess would all kind of fall under your rainbow of hope. (Laughs) That's what makes the biggest difference is when you can talk with kids" (eighth grade teacher). A sixth grade teacher said, "We know our kids on a more personal level than just teacher-student...we know what's going on in their homes."

The adults in the building, from the teachers to the custodial staff, ensured "that those students who don't feel like they have a connection are targeted, so-to-speak, by a staff member so that we know that there's at least one adult reaching out on a daily basis to ask them how they are and to check in with them" (sixth grade teacher). The majority of the staff perceived they succeeded in building relationships with students, and 97% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I know I have an adult in my life who cares about my future" ($M = 4.83$) on the GSP.

Collaborating to problem-solve around obstacles to student success. One aspect of the school that teachers at all levels identified as a factor that promoted hope, engagement, and well-being was "having a day a week where we all meet together and mention kids where we see some concerns" (eighth grade teacher). Within their weekly intervention meetings, the educators "address concerns about kids, and a lot of times it's academic concerns, but sometimes it will be

about some kid who just seemed kind of depressed or withdrawn, and so we try to keep our eye on that” (eighth grade teacher). Sometimes teachers involved the parents in the meetings to develop individual plans to help the students. Sometimes the intervention team decides students would:

be engaged more readily in a different classroom...and if it means changing teachers completely, we change teachers completely; if it means simply putting them in another class period within that teacher’s day, we do that ‘cause we want to make sure that they’re going to be where they’re going to be most successful, regardless of what that looks like. (sixth grade teacher)

In some cases they use the intervention team meetings to “talk about kids that don’t seem to belong someplace and see if we could find some way to get them more engaged [in extracurricular activities]” (Explo teacher). The teachers believed that their collaborative problem-solving efforts also had some impact on their students’ hope levels. One teacher described a student who participated in an intervention meeting, and “when he walked out of that [intervention meeting] yesterday, he said a weight had been lifted...that’s what he said” (seventh grade teacher). The focus on problem-solving may be reflected in the students’ responses to two items on the GSP that tap pathways thinking: Three-quarters of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the GSP item “I can find lots of ways around any problem” ($M = 4.04$) and 94% indicated they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I can think of many ways to get good grades” ($M = 4.54$).

Providing a variety of support resources. The educators mentioned the variety of support resources available for students, including meeting with teachers before or after school, or providing them with a peer tutor, or providing help on weekends through Saturday school.

One Explo teacher said, “I think our school bends over backwards to help kids stay up current on their homework. If a child gets behind, they can temporarily alter their schedule to get them help... They don’t let a kid get so far behind that it’s hopeless.” Several teachers mentioned that they tried to make students feel successful as a way to engender hope. “I’m thinking of one student in particular who had no vision of herself in the future, and we feel like we’ve accomplished something because now she does, it seems like, as months have passed. So I think we try to help them find success somewhere so they can feel positive and look forward” (seventh grade teacher). Students were provided many opportunities to redo homework as well as encouragement from multiple adults in the building. “We give the lots of chances to succeed, and then when they do succeed in something, even if it’s a little thing, then we can kind of grow from that” (eighth grade teacher). One teacher said it was important for students to learn how to work around obstacles:

Teach them how to fail and get back up on there, especially the higher [level] kids that don’t experience [failure] a lot, and understand you’re going to fall down, you’re going to have crappy days on tests or bomb something, and it’s OK, it’s OK, it’s a test, it’s just a life lesson to say, ‘OK, fix it, do everything you can, and move on.’... They’ve got to know they can get to the other side. (seventh grade teacher).

Teachers perceived they could foster hope in students by offering numerous pathways to academic success and providing encouragement to persevere in the face of obstacles.

For students who were struggling emotionally, the counselors offered small groups to help students work through issues like being a new student, relating to peers, dealing with divorce, and improving girls’ self-esteem and leadership skills. Counselors are “available to [students] at any time. If they want to ask to go see a counselor, they’re always open to do that,

and we have students that take advantage of that quite frequently” (sixth grade teacher). By providing resources to support students’ mental health, teachers felt they were contributing to students’ well-being.

Teachers also discussed the importance of providing for students’ basic needs to improve hope, engagement, and well-being. The school had 14 apartment complexes in their attendance area, and many students did not have enough food to eat over the weekends. To address this fundamental need, the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) created a “community closet” that provided backpacks filled with food for students in need. The teachers said they “used to give small gifts to our secretaries and to each other, and we now contribute to kind of an angel fund, and the office does take care of families who really are in need and that’s where that money goes now” (sixth grade teacher). Additionally, the PTO took money that used to fund a holiday luncheon for teachers and gave it to needy families instead. The PTO also funded a “late bus” for students who would otherwise have no way to get home because their parents were working late. Offering assistance to students who were not as privileged as others in the school was another way teachers said their school tried to promote student well-being.

Building relationships with students, collaborating to problem-solve around obstacles to student success, and providing a variety of support resources were highlighted as key factors that elevate student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. In addition, the teachers described other practices that their school did which they perceived enhanced engagement: (a) providing incentives and rewards, (b) making learning relevant to students, and (c) offering numerous structured extracurricular activities. These practices will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Providing incentives and rewards. The teachers used a combination of incentives and rewards to engage students. They had school-wide expectations for behavior called “the Five P’s” (be punctual, prepared, polite, productive, and bring their planner), and “they get a reward if they do follow through” (seventh grade teacher). The seventh grade implemented a behavior-management reward system where twice a quarter students who “don’t have any missing work and haven’t received too many signatures on this behavior plan that we have, can choose to be involved in different kinds of activities throughout that day. And those are very motivating for the kids ‘cause they have absolutely nothing to do with academics” (seventh grade teacher). The teachers described students participating in “Minute to Win It” games and other activities that are “totally crazy, totally fun” to reward students for doing their best work (seventh grade teacher). The sixth grade teachers described a similar system in which every other Friday students who turned in all their homework and did not have behavior problems “get to have some free time with their friends, or go outside, or just play group games” which the teachers found to be motivating for students.

Making learning relevant to students. Many teachers said they thought that making learning relevant for students was one way they engaged their students. In sixth grade they asked students to write in journals and “connect stories to their own personal lives” (sixth grade teacher). In seventh grade, the teachers said they discussed “things that are relevant to their lives and make those connections in order to keep them engaged” (seventh grade teacher). In addition to making learning relevant, the seventh grade teachers also made an effort to connect student learning to future goals by asking their students, “What can you use this for? How’s this going to benefit [you]?” (seventh grade teacher).

Offering numerous structured extracurricular activities. In terms of engagement, all teachers referenced the opportunities for extracurricular activities available to students. The school offered the following clubs: “Fuel Up to Play,” Lego club, MathCounts, chess club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, yoga, fitness club, newspaper, yearbook, writer’s club, art club, diversity time, and community service. The students also had the opportunity to participate in boys’ and girls’ basketball, football, track, volleyball, and cheerleading. The teachers thought a lot of their students participated in the structured extracurricular activities: “We do have great participation in sports, we have a musical and play, we have great participation. Our music programs are awesome. If you come in here before school, there’s something going on in several places...trying to have them have some reason they want to enjoy coming to school” (eighth grade teacher). The school also had assemblies where they brought in motivational speakers that “will talk about the importance of taking school seriously, staying out of trouble and making good decisions, and encouraging kids to take part in sports or things that are offered in school” (eighth grade teacher). According to the teachers, participating in extracurricular activities was one of the ways they helped generate enthusiasm for and interest in school among students.

In terms of practices specifically targeting well-being, teachers identified (a) offering a school-wide, well-being curriculum, and (b) enhancing staff well-being to promote student well-being. These are strategies are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Offering a school-wide, well-being curriculum. The counselors in the school had a well-being curriculum that they went through with the students on a weekly basis. The students had well-being plans that focused on bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention, healthy relationships, and cultural diversity. The well-being curriculum also focused on providing students with “hotlines to call if they are in the middle of a [sexual abuse] situation and what to

do, and dating situations...I'm really impressed with what [the counselors] have brought in because they're attacking all kinds of issues—pregnancy, and abstinence, and every possible thing that could go through a kid's mind" (Explo teacher). The teachers indicated that suicide prevention was also addressed through the well-being curriculum. An Explo teacher commented on the benefit of going through the curriculum during their "guided study" time (similar to a study hall): "Thank goodness we have guided study time to have it happen because otherwise, I don't know how they'd fit it in with they daily curriculum." Some seventh grade teachers questioned the benefit of the program, however, because "[the students] don't relate it to themselves" and they didn't see much change in some students' negative behavior toward their peers.

Enhancing staff well-being to promote student well-being. One teacher shared her perspective on why promoting staff well-being affects students' well-being:

Research proves that happy teachers equate to happy kids (laughed); it does, and it's true. And I feel like if there was anything that could be done to increase those numbers in that Gallup Poll, it's you've got teachers who are encouraged and motivated and inspired and have the desire to take on more challenges because they are as equally respected and have connections and people they can go to as much as the students do. (eighth grade)

By several accounts, the principal was focused on well-being for staff and students: "She's a marathon runner, and I think we've done a good job across the school of thinking [physical well-being] is kind of an important thing and I think that helps kids respect themselves" (eighth grade teacher). The teachers mentioned that the principal also brought in people from the community to talk with her staff about financial, social, physical, and emotional aspects of well-being during a professional development day. Several teachers commented that they really enjoyed the time

to focus on their own learning and well-being. Even the custodian felt that the principal cared about the well-being of the staff and the students.

Despite efforts to focus on personal well-being, as a group some grade levels got along better than others at this school. All of the members of the sixth grade team commented that they cared about each other, “and because we care about each other, that also flows over to the kids, and we view ourselves as on a team.” Another sixth grade teacher said, “We often refer to our faculty as family.” The eighth grade team also appeared to like each other and get along. Other teams, however, seemed to be more detached from another, and in one focus group, the tension between participants was evident. During the guided tour, the assistant principal confirmed that some teams functioned better and were more positive than others.

Perceptions of factors that affect school’s intervention efforts. As with the previous two case studies, the factors that teachers felt affect the school’s intervention efforts, positively or negatively, are discussed in this section. The factors are organized in terms of individual, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems.

Individual student characteristics. The teachers identified two student characteristics that they perceived affected students’ receptivity to the schools’ interventions: present-focus and variable motivation levels. The teachers said trying to get students to set goals for the future was hard because of the students’ perceived “inability to see far into the future beyond today...it’s hard to get them to think at that level of self-awareness” (seventh grade teacher). Other teachers said the students tended to have low expectations of themselves because “they really just don’t have the work ethic to do it” (Explo teacher). Still others said the variability in student motivation levels impacted their efforts to try to engage students and help them set goals:

Teacher A: It totally depends on the kids because some kids have no motivation—none—and they don't even know what you're talking about when you're talking about motivation. They don't even know what goal setting is.

Teacher I: And then there's some that can just take off and they could do it. (Explo teachers)

According to several teachers, the students' receptivity to teachers affected the effectiveness of their intervention strategies: "It depends on their openness also. I mean, some kids look to us and want to be guided and are open. Some of them look at us like we're the enemy...The ones that look at us with an open mind, I think that we are shaping them. The others, I think it's nearly impossible" (seventh grade teacher). Another eighth grade teacher agreed, explaining, "we don't have as much of an effect on them if they don't care or don't put out the effort." There was a clear perception among many teachers that some of their efforts were limited (or enhanced) by individual student characteristics.

Microsystem factors. Several teachers thought that the students' relationships with their parents and home environments impacted their levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. The widespread belief was that some students had very involved parents who "had them set goals or resolutions of how they can get better...if they're in outside lessons, sports, music, art, whatever they're in, somebody else is helping coach them to get better," whereas other students "don't have that at home" (Explo teacher). Other teachers said they thought there were a "significant number of kids that still choose not to [attend the counselors' small groups] for their home situation. I think that seems to impact whether they're enthusiastic or not...or if they're just struggling and they don't feel like they can ever get ahead" (Explo teacher). Another teacher

was concerned about some students who had family responsibilities that limited their ability to take advantage of the extra support resources provided by the school:

Some kids go home to take care of siblings, so that eliminates their ability to even stay after school. And even when we're trying to help them with their grades, they can't...I have one in my class that goes home every night and his mom works all night; he fixes his dinner, and he's home by himself. (Explo teacher)

The teachers had compassion for their students' situations and appeared to want to help them engage in school, but they also seemed to feel constrained by home factors over which they had little control.

The teachers also mentioned two school-level factors that impacted their efforts to build relationships with their students: class size and "busywork." An eighth grade teacher explained, "When you have a class of 30-something versus a class of 20-something [students], it just makes that job that we're trying to do—make a connection with every student—that much more difficult." Another eighth grade teacher said as a staff they felt overrun with "periphery stuff that doesn't seem all that important" which created "a little bit of a morale problem (all the eighth grade teachers nodded in agreement), where we just feel like, well gosh,...it would be nice if we could clean some of those things off our plate and then be able to have more energy and time to work with and help kids."

Some teachers felt the school's policies on homework (e.g., "you get another chance, you get to be late, you get a do-over...not allowing them to struggle a bit") were not helping students become resilient, but rather creating a generation of students who did not know how to problem-solve when they ran into obstacles.

Mesosystem factors. In addition to students' relationships with their parents, the teachers felt the communication between parents and schools impacted the school's efforts to enhance student engagement in school. The teachers said they spent a lot of time attempting to contact parents about their students, but "you can only send so many emails home, call home so many times, have so many parent meetings, so when I'm preparing kids for the future, I can only do it as much as their parents will allow me to prepare them" (seventh grade teacher). Other teachers commented that in order to get the support of parents, "I've also got to sell it to the parents" (seventh grade teacher). The teachers at multiple levels said parental support and involvement was important for student success,

and if I can get through those couple barriers and we're all on board, it makes it a little bit easier, I think, going throughout the year getting where we need to go. I may not always get what I want out of the kid, but at least we've got a plan, and from home and from school we're working in the same direction. (seventh grade teacher)

As such, teachers perceived the interaction between the school and the home as a key determinant of the level of student engagement at school.

Exosystem factors. While the educators did not directly talk about how their own attitudes might impact their schools' intervention efforts, it was clear that some teachers, particularly in the younger grades, had a more compassionate stance toward the students. On the other hand, a number of teachers seemed stressed and overwhelmed by various factors (e.g., too much work, not enough time, perceived lack of effort by students, perceived lack of support from administration and parents). It is reasonable to conclude that the teachers' *relationship with work* likely impacted their *functioning at work*, which likely affected their effectiveness in working with students, both in positive and negative ways.

Macrosystem factors. Teachers at every grade level perceived that the wide range of SES impacted student hope, engagement, and well-being. The school's boundaries encompassed 14 apartment buildings, subsidized housing, spacious, single-family dwellings, and everything in between. A seventh grade teacher explained, "Our school's very unique [in this district] because we have a very diverse socioeconomic situation. So we have kids who, one right now that's on a private plane to see her dad, or whatever, and then we have some that are living in their cars." While a large portion of the student population had parents in the "upper class...these kids don't really want for much" (eighth grade teachers), the school did have enough students who qualified for free and reduced lunch to allow the school to receive Title I subsidized funding from the federal government. An Explo teacher commented on the disparity in resources available to students:

There's kids that don't know where their next meal is going to come from. They don't know if they're going to come home and have electricity...and then some [other students] have iPads in their car...it's kind of a 'have's' and 'have-not's'... 'cause they can't help it if they don't have it. I do have a lot of kids that if I send an email home, that's great, but there's five or six that don't get it because they don't even have a way to get it [without a computer]. Some schools send home a computer, [but] we don't have that.

Other teachers reflected on how the different social classes represented in the student body were "really changing this school...and a lot of our work goes to those few kids...to catch them up" on the social etiquette that the students from higher SES grew up with, such as "what's an appropriate way to talk to adults, what's an appropriate way to interact with other students, and how do we ask for help" (eighth grade teacher). The teachers on the sixth grade team said the changing student demographics made the teachers become "flexible and understanding if the

kids come to school without their homework done” because they didn’t have the resources (e.g., a computer, access to the internet) to do their homework at home (sixth grade teacher). A different sixth grade teacher said:

Some of [our students] live in apartments where there’s nothing on the floor except for a mattress and there’s a deep freezer...most people are shocked because there’s the stereotype that we’re all extremely wealthy [in this district]...and when I think that’s what some of our kids are dealing with then, you know what? I’m really proud of what they do and what they can give us while they’re here.

Overall, the teachers in this building perceived the socioeconomic diversity in the school as a factor that impacted their efforts to influence student hope, engagement, and well-being.

Summary

This chapter provided the results of the three case studies of schools that scored high on the RFI of the GSP. While principals from each school received results from the GSP, the schools varied in their use of the results in their schools. Educators in all three schools identified multiple strategies they used to try to influence student levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. Additionally, the teachers identified factors that they believed affected their school’s efforts to intervene and impact those constructs. The results from a cross-case analysis of the three schools is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

Cross-case Analysis and Interpretation

The previous chapter summarized three individual case studies that used a descriptive analysis framework to better understand (a) whether and how high-scoring schools are using the data from the Gallup Student Poll (GSP), (b) how these middle school educators perceive they are intervening to improve student hope, engagement, and well-being, and (c) what factors the teachers believed influenced those interventions. The last research question for this study, “What are the similarities and differences among middle school educators’ approaches to influencing hope, engagement, and well-being?” is the focus of this chapter.

Cross-case synthesis was the analytic strategy applied to the three cases in this study to draw conclusions about similarities and differences between the schools approaches. Using word tables, the analysis dissected and arrayed the findings from each case. Given that all schools scored in the top quartile of the schools who administered the GSP in the fall of 2010, generalizations about potentially effective interventions and factors that may affect their efficacy were then derived using replication logic. The chapter is organized in a manner similar to the individual case studies. Schools’ uses of the GSP data are discussed first, followed by an exploration of how schools attempted to promote hope, engagement, and well-being in their students. The chapter concludes with the perceived factors that may affect the schools’ efforts to intervene.

Use of the Gallup Student Poll

The three schools were selected because they were in the upper quartile on the Readiness for the Future Index (RFI) of the GSP (see Table 6). All three schools scored above a national mean on the Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing Indices. Just over half (53%) of the nation’s

students were hopeful, compared to over three-quarters of the students at Prairie Range Middle School (PRMS; 77%), 70% of the students at Wooded Lake Middle School (WLMS), and 65% of the students at Sheridan Bridge Middle School (SBMS). Only 5% of students at PRMS were discouraged, and both WLMS and SBMS had almost twice as many discouraged students (9% respectively). All three schools had close to half the number of discouraged students than the national average (16%). The national average of students who scored in the highest categories of all three indices (hopeful, engaged, and thriving) was 34%. While the nation had a greater percentage of students in the “stuck” category (31%), the three schools had higher percentages of hopeful students and lower percentages of discouraged students than the rest of the schools that participated in the GSP nationwide.

Although statistical analyses were not performed on these data, the patterns in the data are noteworthy. In terms of individual items on the Hope Index, the Grand Mean scores in all three schools were consistently higher than the national average on every item. Of note, PRMS had higher mean scores than the other two schools on every Hope Index item, and WLMS had higher mean scores than SBMS on all Hope Index items except “I can think of many ways to get good grades.” It is impossible to know exactly what accounts for the differences between schools, but it is possible that PRMS has certain aspects of their approach to working with students that are not present in the other schools. The analysis later in this chapter delineates some of those distinctive qualities.

The schools also had a greater percentage of students who scored in the highest category on the Engagement Index (80% of students at PRMS, 70% at WLMS, and 68% at SBMS) than the nation (57%). Compared to the percentage of actively disengaged students in the nation’s schools (17%), all three schools again had fewer students in the bottom category. PRMS and

SBMS had less than half as many students in the lowest category (5% and 8%, respectively), followed by WLMS (10%). All three schools had higher Grand Mean scores for each item on the Engagement Index than the rest of the nation's schools. PRMS again scored higher on all items than the other two schools. WLMS scored higher than SBMS on the item "I feel safe at this school" but scored lower on the item "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork." The two schools had identical Grand Mean scores on the remaining items of the Engagement Index.

An inspection of the Wellbeing Index percentages and Grand Means tells a similar story. PRMS, WLMS, and SBMS each had a greater percentage of students scoring in the top category "thriving" (84%, 76%, and 78%, respectively) than the rest of the nation (65%). Importantly, PRMS and SBMS did not have any students scoring in the lowest category on this index (suffering), and WLMS was still below the other schools in the nation (1% of students compared to 2%). While the majority of students across the nation rate their lives in a positive manner, these three schools still outpaced the rest of the nation in terms of evaluative well-being.

In terms of each individual index, the students in all three schools reported high levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. However, the number of students who scored in the highest categories of all three indices combined (the Readiness for the Future Index; RFI) is much lower. To put it into perspective, as a nation, 53% of students were hopeful, 57% engaged, and 65% were thriving, but only 34% of students were hopeful, engaged, *and* thriving. In comparison, 63% of students at PRMS, 50% of WLMS students, and 48% of SBMS were categorized as hopeful, engaged, and thriving at school. In fact, of all the middle schools who administered the GSP to their students in the fall of 2010, PRMS had the highest percentage of students that were "ready for the future" according to the RFI.

Table 6: *Fall 2010 GSP Data for PRMS, WLMS, SBMS, and the National Cohort Samples*

	PRMS	WLMS	SBMS	National
<i>Hope Index</i>	(<i>n</i> = 756)	(<i>n</i> = 607)	(<i>n</i> = 361)	(<i>N</i> = 249,819)
% Hopeful	77	70	65	53
% Stuck	18	21	26	31
% Discouraged	5	9	9	16
Grand Mean (out of 5)	4.63	4.53	4.51	4.39
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)				
I know I will graduate from high school.	4.90	4.85	4.82	4.74
There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.	4.90	4.86	4.83	4.76
I can think of many ways to get good grades.	4.62	4.52	4.54	4.33
I energetically pursue my goals.	4.43	4.24	4.24	4.14
I can find lots of ways around any problem.	4.23	4.04	4.04	3.85
I know I will find a good job after I graduate.	4.66	4.56	4.54	4.43
<i>Engagement Index</i>	(<i>n</i> = 760)	(<i>n</i> = 620)	(<i>n</i> = 363)	(<i>N</i> = 252,427)
% Engaged	80	70	68	57
% Disengaged	15	20	24	26
% Actively Disengaged	5	10	8	17
Grand Mean (out of 5)	4.48	4.26	4.26	4.06
Overall Item Grand Means (out of 5)				
I have a best friend at school.	4.72	4.63	4.62	4.49
I feel safe in this school.	4.66	4.52	4.42	4.03
My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	4.56	4.33	4.33	4.16
At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	4.41	4.19	4.19	3.99
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	4.02	3.61	3.71	3.58
<i>Wellbeing Index</i>	(<i>n</i> = 774)	(<i>n</i> = 633)	(<i>n</i> = 375)	(<i>N</i> = 266,971)
% Thriving	84	76	78	65
% Struggling	16	23	22	33
% Suffering	0	1	0	2
Grand Mean (out of 10)	9.01	8.67	8.75	8.51
<i>Readiness for the Future Index</i> (% Hopeful, Engaged, and Thriving)	63	50	48	34

Note: PRMS, WLMS, and SBMS data are from the unpublished raw data from the fall 2010 administration of the GSP (Gallup, 2010b). The national cohort data is from the GSP USA national data report for the fall 2010 administration. The national data includes all students surveyed in grades 5 through 12.

Given that the three schools all scored high on the three major indices of the GSP, it is worth investigating if they have any characteristics in common that may contribute to their success. As such, one of the first questions to explore is how the schools used the GSP data in their schools. Table 7 presents a word table of the findings from the individual case studies. The three schools varied in their use of the data, ranging from not using it at all to extensive use.

Table 7: *Cross-case Comparison of Schools' Use of GSP Data*

School	Characteristics of GSP Data Use
PRMS	<p><i>Limited use of data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of faculty were unaware of GSP data • Select representative group of faculty (i.e., “leadership team”) examined data • No interventions based on GSP data were discussed or implemented
WLMS	<p><i>Extensive use of data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select representative group of faculty (i.e., “leadership team”) examined data • Entire faculty examined data and discussed potential data-based interventions • Leadership team designed school-wide data-based intervention (i.e., multi-age seminar class) • Entire faculty implemented school-wide data-based intervention • Leadership team planned to use data to evaluate effectiveness of school-wide data-based intervention
SBMS	<p><i>No use of data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of faculty were unaware of GSP data • No interventions based on GSP data were discussed or implemented

Interestingly, the highest scoring school, PRMS did not create any interventions based on the GSP data and only a few members of the faculty who were represented on the leadership team (i.e., both principals, and one teacher from sixth, seventh, eighth grade and Explo teams)

had even seen the data. In contrast, WLMS had extensively used the GSP data by sharing the results with the entire faculty, having discussions about the data and how to use it (in faculty meetings and leadership team meetings), and creating and implementing the multi-age seminar class intervention to provide time to focus on hope, engagement, and wellbeing with students. The school also planned to use the next year's GSP data to evaluate the effectiveness of their intervention. The third school, SBMS, did not share the data at all with the school's staff, nor use it to develop or evaluate any interventions. While it is logical to presume that schools that score high on the GSP may be using the results to inform their work with students, these data do not support that premise. It appears that in these three cases, how they used of the GSP data did not seem to make a large difference in terms of their scores.

Perceived School Interventions that Influence Hope, Engagement, and Well-Being

The following paragraphs describe the cross-case syntheses findings for research question 2, "How do middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being among their students?" The educators from the three schools described many similar approaches that they used, although there was some variability. A summary of these findings is displayed in Table 8. The interventions are grouped under headings according to the constructs that the teachers thought were influenced by their efforts. In response to questions 4, 5, and 6 on the semi-structured interview protocol (i.e., How does your school try to influence hope in your students? How does your school try to influence engagement in your students? How does your school try to influence well-being in your students?, see Appendix C), some strategies were mentioned as responses to all three questions, while others were described in the context of a response to only one question. The italicized, bold-faced headings on the left side of Table 8 are meant to capture those distinctions. The top heading, "Hope, Engagement, and Well-being," groups interventions

thought to influence all three constructs, and the other headings: “Hope only,” “Engagement only,” and “Well-being only,” categorize strategies perceived by teachers to only influence one. Any intervention described in the individual case studies is noted with an “X” under the appropriate school. Of note, some schools identified strategies that they thought impacted all three constructs, and others identified the same strategies as only influencing one (e.g., PRMS identified “Providing recognition and rewards” as a strategy that affected hope, engagement, and

Table 8: *Cross-case Comparison of Schools’ Perceived Interventions*

Perceived Interventions Listed by Construct(s)	Schools		
	PRMS	WLMS	SBMS
<i>Hope, Engagement, and Well-being</i>			
Building positive relationships with students	X	X	X
Creating a positive, supportive atmosphere	X	X	
Communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences*	X		
Providing recognition and rewards*	X		
Providing a variety of support resources*			X
Collaborative problem-solving*			X
<i>Hope only</i>			
Providing a variety of support resources*	X	X	
Collaborative problem-solving*	X	X	
Connecting learning to future goals	X	X	
Telling hope stories		X	
Encouraging students to give hope to others		X	
<i>Engagement only</i>			
Providing recognition and rewards*			X
Using effective instructional strategies		X	
Offering numerous structured extracurricular activities	X	X	X
Making learning relevant to students			X
<i>Well-being only</i>			
Communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences*		X	
Encouraging positive peer interactions	X	X	X
Enhancing staff well-being	X	X	X

Note: * indicates intervention is listed in more than one category

well-being, while SBMS named the same strategy as only influencing engagement). Those discrepancies are noted with asterisks in Table 8.

Comparative analysis of the interventions perceived to influence hope, engagement, and well-being in students reveals all three schools tried to (a) build positive relationships with students, (b) provide a variety of support resources, (c) engage in collaborative problem-solving meetings at least once a week, (d) offer numerous structured extracurricular activities, (e) encourage positive peer interactions, and (f) enhance staff well-being.

Two of the three schools described four more strategies: (e) creating a positive, supportive atmosphere; (f) communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences; (g) providing recognition and rewards; and (h) connecting learning to future goals. Lastly, four interventions were identified by one school but not the others: (j) telling hope stories, (k) encouraging students to give hope to others, (l) using effective instructional strategies, and (m) making learning relevant to students.

While determining causality is beyond the capability of this exploratory study, the fact that 11 of the 14 strategies are reported by educators in at least two cases offers support for further investigation of the potential influence of these interventions on student hope, engagement, and well-being. Even though some interventions were implemented by a single school, it still would be prudent to explore their effectiveness in future studies. For clarity and parsimony, the interventions thought to influence hope, engagement, and well-being were further consolidated and grouped under two meta-themes: (a) developing an environment fostering positive interpersonal interactions, and (b) providing an array of resources supporting students' development (see Figure 1). The remainder of this section focuses on specific similarities and differences among schools for each intervention identified above.

Develop an Environment Fostering Positive Interpersonal Interactions	Provide an Array of Resources Supporting Students' Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build individual relationships with students • Create a positive, supportive atmosphere • Communicate clear expectations with consistent consequences • Encourage positive peer interactions • Enhance staff well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a variety of support resources • Collaborate in problem-solving meetings • Use effective instructional strategies • Offer numerous structured extracurricular activities

Figure 1: Meta-themes and related strategies of interventions presumed to influence the development of hope, engagement, and well-being in middle school students.

Theme 1: Develop an environment fostering positive interpersonal interactions

Build positive relationships with students. The teachers in each school said they intentionally focused on forming relationships with students, which they felt led to greater hope, increased engagement, and a better sense of well-being in students. The principals emphasized the importance of relationship-building throughout the school, and it was encouraged and valued. The teachers at all three schools described similar tactics to develop those relationships, such as connecting with students through shared interests, getting to know students beyond their academic performance, and letting students know they cared.

Create a positive, supportive atmosphere. Educators in two of the three schools specifically referred to the positive impact they believed their school's atmosphere had on students. PRMS encouraged students to feel pride and ownership in their school through "white

out” assemblies, grade level Pod Awards for cleanliness, and displays of student work in the hallways. WLMS also displayed student work in the hallways, including student handprints from their first year in the school and ceiling tiles and photographs from their last year. Individual recognition of students occurred in both schools as well. At PRMS, the school announced students’ and staff’s birthdays over the intercom and put balloons on student lockers to make them feel special. They also had assemblies that recognized individuals and groups of students for their co-curricular and extracurricular achievements. Finally, they had programs like Top Dog Tokens and Ten Dollar Tuesdays to reward students for good behavior.

Of the three schools, WLMS had the most vibrant and colorful environment, which, according to the principal, was an intentional choice by the teachers after they visited their sister elementary school and saw student work displayed everywhere. The walls were colorful and student pictures were prominently displayed throughout the building recognizing various achievements or advertising club activities. There were also numerous handwritten messages of encouragement that the students had hung on the walls as part of the “Love is Louder” anti-bullying campaign. Words of gratitude for specific people were displayed on the walls and bulletin boards on cut-outs of paper water “drops” as a way to “fill the buckets” of their classmates.² The teachers also commented that their students supported each other in larger ways, like raising money to buy a wheelchair lift for a student with a disability. The school also brought in motivational speakers to share personal “hope stories” to encourage students to persevere.

² The “drops” of gratitude were part of an activity that students completed in their seminar classes after reading the book *How Full is Your Bucket?* The book describes words that encourage as “bucket filling” and words that discourage as “bucket dipping.”

Communicate clear expectations with consistent consequences. Teachers at two of the three schools said they thought clearly communicating expectations to students and remaining consistent with consequences was one way they enhanced student well-being.³ PRMS and SBMS had posted common expectations for students, “The Five P’s” (be punctual, prepared, polite, bring a planner, and participate), on the walls in every classroom, and each school consistently rewarded students who successfully adhered to those guidelines. The entire staff at PRMS and some teachers at WLMS had been trained in how to use the “Give ‘Em Five” discipline strategy as a consistent consequence when students did not meet behavioral expectations. The strategy was implemented consistently at all grade levels and with the administration at PRMS. It was only in use at one grade level at WLMS, but the principal stated he had planned to implement it school-wide during the next school year. The educators said they believed knowing what was expected helped students be more engaged, and using the Give ‘Em Five strategy to discipline students and coach them to find different ways to do better made students hopeful.

Encourage positive peer interactions. Many educators felt that positive peer relationships led to greater well-being, however they also acknowledged that bullying had become a problem among students. Therefore, they had devised various ways to try to encourage positive peer interactions and discourage bullying. Teachers in two of the three schools had referenced the “Love is Louder” campaign (described earlier) as a way their school tried to promote speaking to each other using positive instead of hurtful, negative words. PRMS counseling staff had also implemented a Mix It Up program that encouraged students to sit with

³ PRMS educators said this element influenced hope and engagement, as well. Although it was not specifically mentioned at SBMS, the staff did refer to the rewards that students earned by meeting expectations, which implies the faculty had communicated those expectations to students at some point.

different people at lunch and get to know them through conversation starters. The school had been recognized as a model school by the organization that founded the Mix It Up program, and students did appear to get along during lunch when this researcher observed them. Educators at PRMS said they also believed rewarding students for being polite through the Five P's program and recognizing students who helped one another through the Top Dog Tokens encouraged students to get along with each other.

At WLMS, teachers said they thought the counselors helped students who had difficulty socializing with others learn how to relate to their peers in a positive way by running small counseling groups for students. The school did not seem to have the same comprehensive efforts to promote positive interactions among students, and the eighth grade teachers in particular felt their students did not treat each other with respect. Even so, the teachers at all grade levels said they tried to model positive, respectful interactions as a way to encourage their students to treat each other better. They also commented that they did not tolerate bad behavior when they observed it, but conceded that many times students concealed their bad behavior or used online methods to bully, rather than overt behaviors at school. Thus, the educators at this school did try some ways to foster positive peer relationships among students, but it is unclear how effective those efforts were.

The only intervention related to student-to-student relationships that was specifically mentioned by the teachers at SBMS involved the school's well-being curriculum. The counselors at the school taught mini lessons on various topics related to well-being, including peer relationships in several contexts, during guided study class periods. It was difficult to tell whether the educators thought the class was promoting students' well-being, though, because some teachers praised the program, while others said they thought the students did not relate to

the topics. Intuitively, promoting positive peer relationships seems a logical precursor to well-being, and educators from all three schools agreed with the premise. Yet it remains unclear exactly which strategies are effective and further research in this area is warranted.

Enhance staff well-being. The final strategy that was mentioned by all schools as a way to affect student well-being was enhancing staff well-being. Some schools described the phenomenon as a “trampoline effect,” in which the administration makes the teachers feel happy, who in turn, make students happy, and then the process reverses and creates a feedback loop. In other words, many teachers felt happiness was contagious and would spread throughout the school. The staff at PRMS appeared to have the highest morale among the staff, and every focus group participant commented at some point on how much they enjoyed working at that school because they felt supported by the administration and each other. At WLMS, the staff appeared to get along well with each other; in some teams, the laughter in the room during the focus group interviews was pronounced. In contrast, the morale at SBMS seemed somewhat lower. Some grade levels maintained that they “were like a family,” and it was evident through their interactions during the focus group that they valued and supported each other. Other teams, however, appeared to have difficulty talking to each other and they primarily complained about feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

When comparing the transcripts and field notes, some common factors that teachers identified as things that made them feel happy emerged. According to the educators, a principal’s leadership style and treatment of the staff dramatically impacted the functioning of not only the staff, but the entire school. The PRMS staff members said they appreciated the way their principal led by example and had a vision, but was also willing to admit when he made mistakes. They respected him and trusted him because he treated them like professionals and

respected their opinions, even if he disagreed with them. Some teachers at SBMS said they felt their principal was a positive person focused on the physical and emotional well-being of the people in the school, in addition to academic performance. The principal at WLMS had made some significant changes in the way he ran staff meetings, incorporating interdisciplinary teams and fun activities to promote staff cohesiveness and relationships. Many of the faculty commented that their staff was closer than they ever had been because they interacted with new people in a fun way. Even though these data cannot definitively determine whether efforts to enhance staff well-being positively impact student well-being, the findings provide strong support for the potential “effect” of teacher happiness on student happiness.

Theme 2: Provide an array of resources supporting students’ development

Provide a variety of support resources. The three case studies provided evidence that the schools offered numerous ways students could receive support at school, and all of the schools pointed to these resources as ways they influenced hope. The teachers at SBMS said they thought providing extra help also improved students’ engagement and well-being. Perhaps that is because the school not only offered academic help with teachers before and after school (as did the other two schools), but they also offered help on weekends and provided students who qualified for free and reduced lunch with backpacks full of food over the weekend. The PTO at that school also funded an extra bus for students whose parents could not provide transportation after school so that the students could stay and get help after school or participate in extracurricular activities. All three schools also offered a time within the school day for struggling students to receive one-on-one or small group instruction from certified teachers at least once a month, and often more frequently. The schools also had two full-time counselors on staff that students could talk to about personal problems at any time during school hours. Many

of the staff members at each school said they believed having so many different options available to overcome obstacles (academic, psychological, or physical) helped students feel hopeful.

Collaborate in problem-solving meetings. A related intervention was present at all three schools: for an hour every week during the school day staff members would meet in teams and problem-solve how to help struggling students. These were times when teachers, administrators, and counselors met to pool their knowledge about students and figure out where students were struggling so that they could devise a plan that removed obstacles and helped the student move toward their goal. In some schools these were called intervention meetings, while others called them problem-solving meetings. Every teacher said the meetings were important ways they could influence students' hope, even though they often did not directly include students in the meetings. As the teachers described examples of how they were able to change the trajectory of students' thoughts about themselves and behavior toward others as a result of interventions developed through the problem-solving meetings, it seemed evident that having a common time once a week devoted specifically to helping students was a potential way to influence students' hope, engagement, and well-being.

Use effective instructional strategies. Many educators in each school cited their teaching strategies as ways they tried to engage students in school. For example, teachers at WLMS emphasized their use of cooperative learning in classes to encourage students to actively work together to solve problems, rather than passively sitting and absorbing information from a teacher's lecture. Several teachers had decided to collaborate and tasked their students with a problem to solve in teams and present as a final project. While those teachers acknowledged at times their classes felt chaotic, they also commented that their students were engaged in the learning process and excited about their projects. Teachers in other schools said in order to

engage students, it was important to make learning relevant to students' lives by providing real-world examples that are meaningful to them. Another instructional strategy teachers said they used to try to influence student engagement and hope was attempting to connect what students were learning in middle school to the students' future goals, such as doing well in high school or going to college. However, actually asking students to set goals, write them down, and track their progress was not happening consistently at any school. Since setting and tracking goals has been a key component of interventions that have increased student hope in several research studies (see Chapter 2), it is curious that explicit goal setting is not as prominent a practice in these high-hope schools. Future studies could explore whether setting and tracking goals is occurring at other high hope schools.

Perceived Factors that Affect Schools' Intervention Efforts

The following paragraphs describe the cross-case syntheses findings for research question 3, "What factors affect how middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being?" Table 9 displays a graphical representation of the factors identified in each case that were perceived to impact educators' intervention efforts. Consistent with the organizational structure of each case study, the factors are categorized by systems: individual student characteristics, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem factors. Any factor described in the individual case studies is noted with an "X" under the appropriate school.

The cross-case comparison shows that the educators at all three schools identified (a) student motivation; (b) the level and quality of parent-teacher interactions and collaboration; (c) teacher's individual characteristics (e.g., attitudes and stress levels) and their relationship with the work environment; and (d) the socioeconomic status (SES) of their students as factors that affected the effectiveness of their interventions. Interestingly, while microsystem factors that

Table 9: Cross-case comparison of School's Perceived Factors that Affect Intervention

Perceived Factors that Affect Interventions	Schools		
	PRMS	WLMS	SBMS
<i>Individual Student Characteristics</i>			
Motivation	X	X	X
Developmental maturity level	X	X	
Attitude toward learning		X	
Orientation toward time		X	X
Locus of control		X	
Work ethic			X
Receptivity to teachers			X
<i>Microsystem Factors</i>			
Level of parental support	X		X
Parental expectations	X		X
Pressure to perform on high-stakes tests		X	X
Class sizes		X	X
Extra demands placed on teachers by administration			X
Homework completion policies			X
<i>Mesosystem Factors</i>			
Parent-teacher interactions and collaboration	X	X	X
<i>Exosystem Factors</i>			
Teacher attitudes	X	X	X
Teacher stress level	X	X	X
Administrator's leadership style	X	X	X
Administrative support	X	X	X
Staff-to-staff relationships	X	X	X
Administrator-staff relationships	X	X	X
<i>Macrosystem Factors</i>			
Socioeconomic status	X	X	X

potentially influenced the interventions were identified in each case, there was no consensus among all three schools.

Educators commented that highly motivated students (either internally or externally) appeared to be more responsive to their efforts to engage students than their less motivated counterparts. Teachers also said the parents who were willing to engage with the teachers and respond to their communication efforts in a positive manner were helpful because they were “on

the same page” with the teachers, whereas parents who did not respond to repeated requests to correspond or who did not follow-through with the plans developed in problem-solving meetings undermined the schools’ efforts to engage students.

Many factors appeared to influence the teachers’ perceptions of their work environment, and by extension, the effectiveness of their interventions with students. For instance, teachers with more positive attitudes about their students and colleagues provided many more examples of how they intervened with students to boost hope, engagement, and well-being than teachers who had negative attitudes. In fact, the more negative a teacher was during the focus group, the more comments they made blaming other people (students, parents, administrators, society) for the perceived shortcomings of the interventions. All teachers commented that they felt their stress levels (and ways of coping) negatively impacted their work with students. Teachers in all schools believed their administrator set the tone of the building, and if the principal had a positive attitude, it “trickled down” to the staff and students; likewise, staff and students mirrored a principal’s negativity. In addition, participants in the focus group also felt the principal’s leadership style directly impacted the teachers’ attitudes, stress levels, and relationship with work, and by extension, their well-being. If the principal micromanaged the staff, the teachers’ became more negative, whereas a principal who showed his staff that he valued them, empowered them, and led by example was respected and engendered positivity throughout the building. Educators explained another influential factor that impacted their intervention efforts was their ability to get along with each other. It was clear to this researcher that teams where members supported each other seemed to function better and collaborate more to help students than teams that showed signs of discord.

Teachers at all schools also hypothesized that SES influenced students' hope, engagement, and well-being levels. In two of the three schools, educators described their students as privileged due to the wealth and level of education of their parents, which they felt accounted for some of their students hope, engagement, and well-being. The student population in those schools were fairly homogenous in terms of SES. However, at SBMS, the teachers in each team commented on the impact that a changing demographic had on their ability to influence students' hope, engagement, and well-being. The school had a more heterogeneous population, with students who lived in wealthy neighborhoods coming to school alongside homeless students. Many of the educators felt their students' needs varied due to their SES levels, and that impacted how teachers attempted to meet those needs.

In two of the three cases, teachers thought variability in students' maturity levels (i.e., immature vs. mature students) impacted student's behavior (or misbehavior) and, in turn, how they responded to the interventions. Teachers at WLMS and SBMS said they believed the students had difficulty conceptualizing future goals because they were more present-focused at this stage in their development, which may have negatively impacted their hope and engagement with school. Only teachers at WLMS said they thought a students' attitude toward learning influenced their efforts: students with a positive attitude were more receptive to the interventions, and students with negative attitudes were more resistant. Similarly, the staff at SBMS reported students' work ethics affected their efforts to help students engage at school (low work ethic was thought to be related to less engagement). The teachers at SBMS also thought students who were more open to teachers were more likely to respond to their interventions than those who were not receptive to teachers. The educators at WLMS also mentioned a student's locus of control impacted their interventions. Students that teachers perceived had an internal locus of

control seemed to be more responsive to their engagement efforts than students with an external locus of control.

Additionally, educators in two schools suggested that factors in students' home microsystems (i.e., level of parental support; parental expectations) affected the school's efforts to boost student hope, engagement, and well-being. For example, parental support was regarded as an important ingredient for student success, but teachers said some parents actually hindered their efforts to help students build hope and increase engagement because they rescued students from potential consequences of failure, rather than helping the students learn how to persevere in spite of obstacles. Teachers felt that many parents expected a lot of their students beyond academic performance, which led to increased stress in students and decreased their well-being. In one school, teachers commented that students were involved in so many extracurricular activities that students were staying up until 1 am to complete their homework, which impacted their well-being. In another school, some students were unable to participate in extracurricular activities or stay after school for extra help because they were expected to take care of their siblings while their parents were at work. In both cases, teachers felt the parental expectations negatively affected their efforts to engage students.

Teachers in two of three schools also commented on school-level characteristics that they thought negatively impacted their ability to form relationships with students: the pressure to prepare students for high-stakes tests, and large class sizes. SBMS was the only case where teachers felt they had extra demands placed on them by the administration which consequently increased their stress levels and limited the time they felt they could spend cultivating relationships with students. In contrast, PRMS teachers commented that they appreciated their administration relieving some pressure from the staff by limiting the amount of "extra tasks"

they were required to complete. The homework policies were also discussed by SBMS teachers: some felt the re-do policy for homework offered students hope, and others believed it “coddled” students and actually reduced their engagement in school because they knew they didn’t have to try as hard the first time. In any case, teachers at that school felt the policy had some effect on their efforts to build hope and engagement in students.

Summary of Interpretation of Findings

In conclusion, this chapter consisted of a cross-case analysis of the findings from the three schools in this study. In terms of how these high-performing schools used the data from the GSP, results were inconsistent. One school did not use the results at all, another had limited use, and one extensively used the GSP to inform their work with students. The schools used multiple interventions to address hope, engagement, and well-being, which were categorized into two meta-themes. Theme 1: Develop an environment fostering positive interpersonal interactions, involved building relationships with students, creating a positive and supportive atmosphere, communicating clear expectations with consistent consequences, encouraging positive peer interactions, and enhancing staff well-being. Theme 2: Provide an array of resources supporting students’ development, consisted of schools providing a variety of support resources, collaborating in weekly problem-solving meetings, using effective instructional strategies, and offering numerous extracurricular activities. At each school, teachers identified factors they believed influenced their intervention efforts. Student motivation, maturity, orientation toward time, attitudes toward learning, work ethic, locus of control and receptivity to teachers were perceived as individual student characteristics that affected how students responded to the strategies teachers used. Student’s home life and school-level policies and practices and parent-teacher interactions were other factors that teachers named as moderating

factors. In terms of the teachers, their work with students seemed to be affected by their attitudes, stress levels, and reported qualities of relationships with their co-workers. Finally, teachers at all schools claimed that students' SES influenced the schools' intervention efforts. The next chapter will summarize the study's conclusions, discuss its limitations, and offer directions for future research.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion

Because the Gallup Student Poll (GSP) is a relatively new measure and research related to the measure is in its infancy (Lopez & Calderon, 2011), little is known about what schools are doing with the information about students' hope, engagement, and well-being levels once they received their results. The purpose of this exploratory multiple case study was to fill a gap in the literature and better understand how high-scoring middle schools on the Gallup Student Poll (GSP) were (a) using the GSP data to influence their practice and (b) attempting to influence students' hope, engagement, and well-being at school. Given the complex array of systems that impact human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), an effort was made to better understand perceived contextual factors that may have influenced the schools' intervention efforts. Thus, the following research questions guided the collection and analysis of data:

1. How are middle school educators using the GSP data?
2. How do middle school educators influence hope, engagement, and well-being among their students?
3. What factors affect how middle school educators influence student hope, engagement, and well-being?
4. What are the similarities and differences between middle school educators' approaches to influencing students' hope, engagement, and well-being?

The conclusions are based upon the research questions and findings, and thus address these areas: (a) whether and how the educators used the GSP data to inform their practice, (b) how middle school educators thought they influenced their students' hope, engagement, and well-being, (c) what factors likely affected the educator's efforts, and (d) whether the findings varied

or were consistent across schools. The discussion that follows describes the major findings and implications associated with each research question. The chapter concludes with a description of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Research question 1: Use of the GSP. The findings indicate that among these three high-scoring schools, use of the GSP data was variable. In one school, the principal provided time for the staff to go over the data during a faculty meeting and brainstorm various ways to address areas that could be improved. Then, the leadership team, composed of the principal, assistant principal, and one teacher from each team (sixth, seventh, eighth, and Explo) met to discuss potential interventions that could be implemented in the school. Based on their examination of the GSP data, the leadership team designed a school-wide intervention that involved grouping students into multi-age seminar classes, building time into the school schedule for those classes to meet on a regular basis, and developing activities that the educators thought would improve hope, engagement, and well-being among students.

The staff had variable reactions to the effectiveness of the seminar classes. Some teachers said the discussions they had with their seminar classes helped them to better understand the ways that students want to be recognized for their schoolwork, and others thought some of the activities were beneficial in creating a climate of respect in the building. On the other hand, the students were randomly assigned to each seminar class, which resulted in an uneven distribution of students. The teachers with larger seminar classes appeared disgruntled by the unequal class sizes, and others felt the people who assigned classes had not taken into account how certain students might interact with their peers, resulting in unbalanced student leadership across the classes. Even with the problems, the leadership team seemed open to the staff's ideas

for how to improve the program in the future. Members of the leadership team also said they planned to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminar classes by examining pre- and post-intervention GSP scores on a school-wide basis.

The principal of that school said he valued the information gleaned from the GSP with students, and decided to try to influence the hope, engagement, and well-being of his staff as well. He created multidisciplinary teams of teachers, parallel in design to the students' seminar classes, and asked each team to develop a fun, team-building activity to start faculty meetings. While this intervention was not directly measured by the GSP, the principal and the teachers thought they had developed better relationships with one another and it improved staff morale.

At the other two schools, however, the staff members had limited awareness of the GSP data. In one school, the majority of teachers said they had never seen the results and the few teachers who thought they knew actually confused the measure with another test they had given students during the year. However, the educators said they were interested in finding out how their school scored. In the other school, many of the teachers remembered looking at the data during one faculty meeting, but it was not discussed further. The principal at that school acknowledged that he had not done much with the GSP because he was not sure how to apply the results to improve his school. Thus, while principals from each school had received results and were familiar with the GSP data, what they did with the data from that point varied from no use to extensive use.

Implications. Given the current climate of high-stakes achievement tests and the emphasis on tracking students' progress and using data-driven interventions in schools, one would expect high-scoring schools to use the GSP data to inform their practice. However, the findings from this study do not support that assumption. In fact, the three schools varied greatly

in terms of what they did with the GSP results, ranging from no use at all to developing an intervention based on the data and implementing it school-wide. Since all principals confirmed they had received the data, but not every staff was aware of the results, it appears extent of data dissemination and use depends in on the principal. The principal of the school that developed the intervention spoke enthusiastically about his commitment to using the GSP results to measure hope, engagement, and well-being in his school, whereas the other principals expressed concerns about the lack of evidence-based interventions related to hope and well-being, in particular, which factored into their decisions to not use the data at their schools.

Additionally, since all three schools scored high on the GSP whether or not they had explored the data as a staff, it is unclear whether awareness of the GSP data is influential in the kinds of interventions the schools implement with their students. It is possible that in schools where their students are already scoring high, having knowledge of the school's GSP scores may not serve to have a significant impact on how the schools operate daily because there is not a need to change "business as usual." However, in schools where the teachers had seen the data, they said reviewing their students' responded to individual items on the GSP made them reflect on how to improve their work with students. Thus, it still may be beneficial for the entire staff in high scoring schools to see the GSP data. Further exploration of whether and how schools use the GSP data is warranted to better understand if there is a relationship between knowledge and use of the results and students' scores on the GSP.

Research question 2: Perceived interventions. The results from the cross-case analysis show that schools implemented many interventions that the teachers thought influenced hope, engagement, and well-being. In this study, the strategies were divided into two major themes:

(a) creating an environment that fosters positive interactions, and (b) providing an array of support resources.

Creating an environment that fosters positive interactions. The findings indicated that educators at all schools thought they positively influenced students' hope, engagement, and well-being through their efforts to create an environment that fostered positive interactions between and among students and staff at school. The participants listed multiple strategies that were then grouped into five categories: (a) creating a positive and supportive atmosphere; (b) building relationships with students; (c) communicating clear expectations with consistent results; (d) encouraging positive peer interactions; and (e) enhancing staff well-being.

In general, schools employed a combination of strategies to make students feel welcome and supported at school. Two of the three schools had a system of incentives and rewards for good behavior, which the teachers thought made the students more engaged at school and promoted prosocial behaviors, which led to more positive interactions between staff and students. All of the schools attempted to help students feel a sense of belongingness, although the way they did it varied. One school provided students with identical t-shirts to wear at pep assemblies and recognized their students by displaying their pictures on the walls and giving them balloons on their birthdays. In another school, student work was displayed in the hallways and they left a physical mark on the school through their handprints on the walls and personalized painted ceiling tiles. Whatever the method, the educators believed a creating positive and supportive environment promoted hope, engagement, and well-being in their students.

All of the educators involved in this study said they thought one of the best ways to increase student hope, engagement, and well-being was through relationship building. The

teachers and principals spoke to students by name in the hallways, usually asking about something unrelated to academic tasks (e.g., How did you do in the basketball game?). The principals each emphasized the importance of students feeling like they had an adult that they could talk to at school. Strategies listed by teachers for creating bonds with students included finding common interests, making time to talk one-on-one with students and listen to them, and offering encouragement and validation.

Along with building relationships with students, the staff members thought that it was important to communicate their expectations to students early and often, as well as provide consistent consequences when students met or fell short of the desired behaviors. Every school had school-wide expectations for behavior posted on the classroom walls, and students who met the expectations were consistently rewarded. For students who had difficulty meeting the teacher's requirements, the schools opted to use a form of positive, rather than punitive, discipline. The Give 'Em Five strategy was evident in two of the three schools, which emphasized helping students identify what they did wrong and how they were going to solve the problem in a manner that respected the dignity of the student and did not rely on shame or embarrassment. The teachers' said they thought giving students a clear target goal for behavior, using consistent discipline strategies to help students find alternate ways to meet those expected behaviors, and reinforcing students who met the goals made students feel more hopeful and they were more engaged in the classroom, which led to greater well-being.

The expectations for classroom behavior dovetailed with the schools' efforts to foster positive peer relationships among students. Again, while methods varied by school, each school was attempting to prevent negative peer interactions and promote healthy relationships. Some did this through national programs (e.g., Love is Louder, or Mix It Up at lunch) or a locally

developed well-being curriculum, while others relied more on counselors meeting with students and running small groups intended to develop social skills. In any case, the school had intentionally done something to try to help students treat each other with respect as a way to improve student well-being.

The last strategy involved principals' efforts to enhance the well-being among their staffs. The teachers firmly believed that when they felt happy and supported at work, they were more engaged in the classroom and better attentive to their students' needs, which then impacted their students hope, engagement, and well-being. While not every staff members at each school appeared happy on the day the data were collected, the majority of the teachers seemed upbeat and positive about the way they were treated by their principals. There were only a few individual teachers who had negative things to say about the administration, and those comments were limited to questioning one or two administrative decisions about specific programs. With few exceptions, the staff at each school appeared to like each other and the people they worked for, which they said made them feel engaged at work. They believed a "trickle-down effect" was likely, and their well-being, in turn, enhanced their students' well-being.

Providing an array of support resources. The second major intervention that teachers thought improved hope, engagement, and well-being was offering numerous resources to support students and meet their physical, academic, emotional, and psychological needs. All three schools had support staff on site every day, including two counselors, a school resource officer, a nurse, a librarian, and multiple paraprofessionals. The schools also had active parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) that raised money and volunteered their time to support the needs of the students. In the case of one school, the PTO provided food over the weekends for students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch. All schools had active counselors who participated in

collaborative problem-solving meetings, met with parents, ran small support groups, and developed and implemented whole-school programs aimed at improving student well-being and mental health.

When asked about how they addressed engagement, teachers uniformly referred to the numerous structured extracurricular activities (SEAs) that were offered by the school. While the sports and performing arts that were offered did not vary across schools, the teachers said clubs were offered according to students' interest in a given area. Teachers said SEAs not only provided a way for them to connect with students outside the classroom and build relationships with them, but they believed they also helped students feel more connected to the school and enthusiastic about participating in school activities.

Educators also cited the extensive array of academic support options that students had to get help at school. Ranging from one-on-one tutoring before and after school with teachers to small group "guided study classes" to special education services, the schools appeared to provide many opportunities for students to receive extra instruction from teachers. However, just because options were offered does not necessarily mean that students used them. To address this issue, in these schools it appeared that teachers persisted in recommending that struggling students take advantage of one or more of the options, and many students were receptive. It is also possible that some students participated because their parents made them, while others may have sought out the help on their own. In any case, the teachers perceived that providing extra academic support beyond the regular classroom time helped students feel hopeful that they had options for success, which they believed led to more engagement during class.

Another commonly referred to intervention was a weekly collaborative problem-solving team meeting. All three schools had rearranged the school's schedules to accommodate teachers

having one hour each week to meet as grade-level teams for the sole purpose of problem-solving ways around obstacles to individual students' success at school. This meeting time allowed the staff to develop a plan of action and monitor students' progress, adjusting their efforts accordingly. In a sense, the teachers were demonstrating hopeful thinking by working toward a common goal (student success) and generating many paths toward the goal in order to circumvent obstacles to student learning. Several teachers commented on the positive impact their efforts had on students' engagement and happiness in school, and they attributed those effects to the fact that they had a weekly problem-solving meeting. Whether the meeting actually caused an increase in students' hope, engagement, and well-being, however, cannot be inferred from these data.

Finally, teachers at every school said they thought their instructional practices within the classroom were ways they tried to engage students. Connecting the content to the students' lives and making it more meaningful made students more engaged in the learning process, according to the teachers. Other teachers commented that they intentionally tried to connect their lessons to relevant future goals that students had, such as going to high school or getting into college. Several teachers described cooperative learning projects in which students worked in groups to solve problems or create artifacts to present what they learned to each other. The teachers said they believed their students were more engaged while working on those projects than they were when teachers used more traditional instructional strategies like lecturing.

Implications. While educators in this study presumed that fostering positive interactions and providing support resources influenced student hope, engagement, and well-being, the findings only reflect the participants' assumptions about possible effective interventions. These data cannot determine whether the strategies described above caused students to be more

hopeful, engaged, and have higher well-being. For example, other schools may have implemented these strategies and scored average or below average on the GSP measure. Alternately, it is possible that these characteristics may not be related to hope, engagement, or well-being at all, despite the fact that multiple educators from multiple schools presume that they are connected. Therefore, it would be important to determine if schools with fewer resources and fewer positive interactions among students and staff still have high GSP scores. Further research is needed to determine whether the findings can be replicated in other schools, and if the named interventions are efficacious.

Research Question 3: Factors that may influence schools' intervention efforts. The results suggest that there are multiple factors on multiple levels that influence schools' efforts to influence hope, engagement, and well-being. The sections that follow summarize the possible moderating factors by individual, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. An important caveat is that these factors are primarily derived from the focus group interviews and therefore reflect perspectives of the educators in the school. The researcher attempted to minimize this bias through constant comparison and triangulation with the principal's comments and the researcher's observations.

Individual student level factors. Teachers identified the following as student-level factors: motivation, attitude, maturity, work ethic, locus of control, orientation toward time, and openness toward teachers. In general, teachers seemed to believe that students' motivation levels played into their willingness to engage in learning and less motivated students were harder to influence. The teachers also commented on students' attitudes toward learning and other people; students with positive attitudes were viewed as more receptive to teachers' interventions than those with negative attitudes. Students displaying less maturity were viewed as difficult to work

with because they didn't take school seriously. Several teachers said they felt the students "had no work ethic" and that hampered attempts to get students to participate in class. In contrast, teachers observed that students who appeared to have an internal locus of control were less likely to blame others for their problems and more willing to engage self-improvement strategies. In terms of helping students feel hopeful, the some teachers felt it was difficult to get students to think about their future goals because, developmentally, students were more concrete thinkers and present-focused. Lastly, teachers thought students who were more open in general to the teachers were more receptive to their efforts.

Overall, the educators seemed to think that students' physiological development and attitudes about themselves, their learning, and the people they interacted with at school affected how responsive they were to the teachers' interventions. While it was clear that the teachers felt there were qualities inherent in students that impacted their efforts to reach the students, those perceived student characteristics may or may not actually impact hope, engagement, and well-being interventions. It is entirely possible that the teachers' responses to student behaviors, rather than the students' inherent individual characteristics, have more to do with the effectiveness of teachers' efforts.

Microsystem level factors. Teachers identified factors related to the students' home and school environments that they thought played a role in their students' responses to their interventions. In terms of students' home lives, the teachers felt that parental expectations impacted how much time students had available to take advantage of the support resources offered at school. In many cases, the teachers felt the parents asked their children to do too much (e.g., multiple sports or extracurricular activities; taking care of their siblings when they were working), although others felt the parents did not expect enough from their children (e.g.,

completion of homework; attending academic support sessions before or after school). The level of support the student received from their parents at home was also thought to impact the school's efforts. It is important to reiterate that the findings are the result of the focus group participants' interviews, and as such other perspectives are not available to confirm or dispute the teachers' opinions.

Other school-level factors were cited as elements that affected the schools' collective efforts to boost hope, engagement, and well-being. The overall safety and cleanliness of the building was thought to contribute to their efforts to create a positive environment. Teachers had disparate positions regarding how the schools' policies affected their efforts. On one hand, the teachers perceived the schools' discipline policies helped educators engage students. However, the schools' homework policies were more controversial. Some educators felt that allowing students to redo assignments enhanced a sense of hope and increased engagement because they had a chance to go back and use different strategies to improve their scores. Others thought the policy decreased hope because students were not taught how to persevere in the face of obstacles and develop new pathways to try in future assignments. Educators also believed that small classes allowed teachers to form better relationships with students because they could spend more time with them one-on-one, whereas large class sizes were thought to hinder relationship development. Several teachers also commented that the pressure to perform on high-stakes achievement tests resulted in a collective focus on teaching content, more demands on their time, and less focus on building relationships with students.

Mesosystem level factors. The majority of educators said their relationship with students' parents influenced their efforts to help students be successful at school. Teachers said that if they were able to collaborate with the parents and implement the plans developed in

problem-solving meetings, both at home and school, the students did better and seemed more hopeful and engaged. However, teachers also commented on the detrimental effects of either too much or too little communication with and support from parents. Although the parent-teacher communication usually did not directly involve the student, the teachers thought the type of relationship they had with parents (positive or negative) impacted their efforts to get students more engaged at school.

Exosystem level factors. The findings from this study provide the strongest support for the potential effects that the teachers' relationship with work has on their intervention efforts. The teachers were the best source of information on their own attitudes toward work, and it was evident that their perceptions influenced how they thought about and approached working with students and each other. The teachers who described how much they enjoyed coming to work and felt supported and respected by their administration, colleagues, parents and students also listed the most interventions and thought their efforts were successful. Some of those teachers said they had previously worked in different schools where they felt undervalued and a lack of respect and support, and the comparison of their experiences lent support to their assertion that their work environment affected their efforts. Other teachers primarily spoke negatively about their students and seemed unhappy and disengaged at work; they tended to blame the students, parents, or administration for interventions not being effective. While there was some variability within schools, a cross-case comparison of the schools revealed that educators generally seemed to be invested in their work and had a favorable view of their work environment.

It is probable the teachers' feelings about their work environment have an effect on their interactions with students and thereby have an influence on actions that might build hope within their students, encourage engagement, and help students feel more positively about their lives in

general. That is, less hopeful, disengaged teachers who have negative views about their lives may be less involved with students than their more hopeful, engaged, and thriving counterparts. Studies investigating whether teacher hope, engagement and well-being are mediating or moderating variables in interventions designed to boost those factors would be an important addition to the literature.

Macrosystem level factors. Socioeconomic status was the final factor that teachers thought affected their schools' interventions. Because all three schools were in the same affluent suburban school district, many teachers commented that they thought their students had more resources available to them than students in impoverished school districts. The teachers commented that they thought some of their efforts to improve hope, engagement, and well-being were met with less resistance because the students already felt hopeful and were expected to be engaged at school. Other teachers highlighted the differences between the students with wealthy parents and the students with unemployed or working class parents who attended their school. There was a prominent belief among the teachers that students with a lower SES were not as hopeful, or engaged, and had lower well-being because they had fewer resources. While it is not clear whether that relationship exists, the teachers in this study perceived differences in the way their students responded to their interventions, as well as the types of interventions they used with students, were related to the financial and social status of the students. In essence, the teachers believed that students' personal resources significantly limited or enhanced the effectiveness of their intervention efforts.

Implications. As has been stated multiple times in the previous sections, the findings from this study are exploratory in nature and do not imply causality. Nevertheless, the results suggest that multiple factors are believed by teachers to affect schools' efforts to boost hope,

engagement, and well-being in their students. The educators in this study identified individual student characteristics, home and school-level factors, parent-teacher interactions, their own relationship with work, and students' SES as possible mediating or moderating variables. It is possible that other variables, not mentioned by the teachers, also play a role. For example, research suggests that peer relationships (i.e., having friends or being bullied) have an impact on student hope, engagement, and well-being (Iyer, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eisenberg, & Thompson, 2010; You, et al., 2008), and they may also influence how students respond to educators' efforts to increase their hope, engagement, and well-being. Conversely, it is possible that the factors identified by teachers play a much less important role than the teachers believe.

Research question 4: Similarities and differences among schools. In some ways, these three schools had many similarities. They were part of the same school district, so it is likely that some of the interventions cited by multiple schools (e.g., the Five P's, Give 'Em Five, Love is Louder, Mix It Up at lunch) were implemented district-wide. The school district also had identified enhancing student well-being as a goal in its strategic plan, which is likely a reason that all three schools had a specific focus on student well-being. The schools operated on the same schedule, and each one of them had weekly problem-solving intervention meetings as part of a greater district mandate. The schools also offered a wide range of structured extracurricular opportunities, seemed to have active PTOs, and had additional support staff to augment their interventions.

Additionally, the schools had similar demographics and levels of experience among their staff. However, one of the schools received Title I funds because they had a larger sub-group of students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch. That school also had a more diverse

racial and ethnic student demographic than the other two, even though the majority of the students were Caucasian.

While the schools were all high scoring schools on the GSP, PRMS scored consistently higher than WLMS, and WLMS scored higher than SBMS. Although statistical analyses were not run on these data to determine whether significant differences exist, an interesting pattern of teacher responses emerged from the data that seems related to the trend in scores. Overall, the greatest difference between the schools was in the number of comments about the administration and the teachers' perceptions of support. The teachers at PRMS spent a much greater amount of time describing their own well-being and positive feelings about the administration than the educators at the other schools. In fact, they referenced their appreciation of their principal more than either of the other two schools. It may be that teachers who feel empowered and supported at work have more energy and excitement about their jobs, and thus better able to model hope, engagement, and well-being as well as try to cultivate them in their students.

Implications. Because the schools in this study were from a single district, it was expected that there would be some common practices between them, which held true in this study. However, even though the schools were expected to adhere to the same district level policies and operated under the same schedules, there were some differences between schools that seemed to stem from the administrations' priorities, the staff's beliefs and attitudes, and the student demographics. Future studies should draw from schools in different school districts in multiple areas around the nation with various student and staff demographics to see if the characteristics of the high scoring schools described in this study are replicated at other sites.

Limitations of the Current Study

Every study has its limitations, and this study is no exception. The cases in this study were restricted to a convenience sample of schools that participated in the GSP, and therefore it is not representative of schools that did not measure hope, engagement, and well-being, but nevertheless may use some of the strategies described in this study. While efforts were made to recruit schools from both the highest and lowest quartiles of the GSP, only high scoring schools responded to repeated requests for participation. Because this sample does not include a comparison group of schools, it is impossible to determine whether the strategies identified by teachers contribute to their scores. It could be that schools in the lowest quartile may be implementing the same interventions, which would indicate some other factors would be responsible for the differences between schools. In addition, the final sample consisted of three schools from the same school district, which significantly limits the generalizability of the findings to other schools within the same area.

Case study methodology calls for researchers to draw from multiple sources of data to develop converging lines of inquiry, a process called triangulation, which increases the construct validity of the findings (Yin, 2009). Although survey, interview, and observation data were collected as a way to strengthen the validity of the findings, data from other stakeholders, such as interviews or focus groups with students and parents, was not collected. However, the researcher did view the GSP results as representative of student perspectives. The decision was made at the outset to limit focus groups to faculty because of the time and extended resources that would be required for this researcher to secure informed consent from parents of the students.

Another reason for using multiple sources of evidence was to corroborate information from the interviews, since interviewees' responses may be biased, or subject to poor recall (Yin, 2009). While it is desirable to have the draft report reviewed by participants as a method of

ensuring the trustworthiness of data, due to time constraints, the interviewees were not provided the opportunity to do respondent validation. However, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked by a different person to ensure there were no discrepancies between the audiotapes and the transcripts.

Given that this was a qualitative case study and researcher bias is a potential threat to validity, the researcher also recruited other people to review and evaluate the findings throughout the data analysis process. This involved asking multiple people to independently code sections of focus group transcripts, and asking a class of graduate students to provide feedback about preliminary findings and discuss alternative explanations with the researcher. Additionally, the case reports were reviewed by the researcher's advisor and revised accordingly.

Directions for Future Research

The purpose of an exploratory case study is to identify directions for future research that will potentially add to the literature base (Yin, 2009). While these findings cannot provide evidence of causality, they do offer a starting place for examining possible ways that schools influence hope, engagement, and well-being. The next logical step would be to explore whether these findings hold true with a comparison group of low-scoring schools, using a replication study design. Given the small sample of this multiple-case study, it would be important to recruit more schools from different areas of the nation as well as high- and low-scoring schools to participate in a replication study. Future studies should also attempt to gather data from multiple stakeholders (e.g., focus groups or interviews with students and parents) to strengthen the validity of results.

Since the results of this study indicate that the three high-scoring schools varied in their use of the GSP, and it remains unclear whether it is necessary for all staff members to be aware

of the data. Future researchers could explore what other schools are doing with the GSP data through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with educators.

Researchers could also investigate the efficacy of any of the interventions through quasi-experimental or experimental studies with control groups or wait-list control groups and gather pre- and post-intervention GSP data. It also will be important for researchers to include measures that tap systemic level factors reported in this study and include them as covariates in any quantitative analysis. Since the evaluating school interventions involves nested data (i.e., students within classrooms; students within schools), quantitative researchers should use hierarchical linear modeling analysis to test the effectiveness of the interventions and explore possible mediating or moderating factors. Ultimately, a large scale mixed-methods study would be helpful in determining which methods “work” to boost hope, engagement, and well-being at school.

Overall Conclusions

This research study set out to investigate methods that high-scoring schools on the GSP were using to try to positively influence student hope, engagement, and well-being. Ultimately, the results of this study provided a foundation upon which other researchers can build. The findings suggest that (a) high-scoring schools may or may not use the data from the GSP to inform their practice, and that educators in those schools believe (b) their efforts to build relationships between and among staff and students and provide many support resources lead to more hopeful, engaged, and thriving students and (c) that a variety of systemic factors likely influence the effectiveness of school’s interventions in this area. My hope is that future research based on these findings will provide more evidence about “what works” (and what does not)

with middle school students to help schools better attend to the positive psychological needs of students so that they can flourish within the school system and beyond.

References

- Alarcon, G. M., Bowling, N. A., & Khazon, S. (2013). Great expectations: A meta-analytic examination of optimism and hope. *Personality and Individual Differences, 54*, 821-827.
- Anderson, A. R., Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., & Lehr, C. A. (2004). Check & Connect: The importance of relationships for promoting engagement with school. *Journal of School Psychology, 42*(2), 95-113. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2004.01.002
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 369-386. doi: 10.1002/pits.20303
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D., & Reschly, A. L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*(5), 427-445.
- Arnau, R. C., Rosen, D. H., Finch, J. F., Rhudy, J. L., & Fortunato, V. J. (2007). Longitudinal Effects of Hope on Depression and Anxiety: A Latent Variable Analysis. *Journal of Personality, 75*(1), 43-64.
- Babyak, M. A., Snyder, C. R., & Yoshinobu, L. (1993). Psychometric properties of the Hope Scale: A confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality, 27*(2), 154-169.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist, 37*(2), 122-147. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122
- Betts, J. A., Appleton, J. J., Reschly, A. L., Christenson, S. L., & Huebner, E. S. (2010). A study of the factorial invariance of the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI): Results from

- middle and high school students. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 25(2), 84-93. doi: 10.1037/a0020259
- Bouwkamp, J. A., & Lopez, S. J. (2001). *Making Hope Happen: A program for inner-city adolescents*. . Unpublished masters thesis. University of Kansas.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), 723-742.
- Bryant, F. B., & Cvengros, J. A. (2004). Distinguishing hope and optimism: Two sides of a coin, or two separate coins? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(2), 273-302.
- Burns, R. A., & Machin, M. A. (2009). Investigating the structural validity of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being scales across two samples. *Social Indicators Research*, 93(2). doi: 10.1007/s11205-008-9329-1
- Calderon, V. J. (2011). [Personal communication].
- Calderon, V. J. (2012). Understanding the GSP: measuring hope, engagement, and wellbeing in America's schools [Webinar]. Omaha, NE: Gallup.
- Campbell, A. (1976). Subjective measures of well-being. *American Psychologist*, 31(2), 117-124. doi: [10.1037/0003-066X.31.2.117](https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.31.2.117)
- Cantril, H. (1965). *The pattern of human concerns*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Chang, E. C. (1998). Hope, problem-solving ability, and coping in a college student population: Some implications for theory and practice. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 54(7), 953-962.
- Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., Appleton, J. J., Berman-Young, S., Spanjers, D. M., & Varro, P. (2008). Best practices in fostering student engagement. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes

- (Eds.), *Best Practices in School Psychology V* (pp. 1099-1120). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (2012). Epilogue. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 813-817). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Christenson, S. L., & Thurlow, M. L. (2004). School dropouts: Prevention considerations, interventions, and challenges. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13(1), 36-39.
- Ciarrochi, J., Heaven, P. C. L., & Davies, F. (2007). The impact of hope, self-esteem, and attributional style on adolescents' school grades and emotional well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(6), 1161-1178.
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2013). CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs, Preschool and Elementary School Edition.
- Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M. K., & Elder Jr., G. H. (2004). Intergenerational bonding in school: The behavioral and contextual correlates of student-teacher relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 77(1), 60-81.
- Curry, L. A., Snyder, C. R., Cook, D. L., Ruby, B. C., & Rehm, M. (1997). Role of hope in academic and sport achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(6), 1257-1267.
- Dew Gilligan, T., & Huebner, E. S. (2002). Multidimensional life satisfaction reports of adolescents: a multitrait-multimethod study. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32(7), 2002.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542-575. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542

- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43. doi: 10.1037/0003-006X.55.1.34
- Diener, E., Diener, M., & Diener, C. (1995). Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 851-864. doi: 1.1037/0022-3514.69.5.851
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75. doi: 10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13
- Duncan, A. (2012). After 10 years, it's time for a new NCLB. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/blog/2012/01/after-10-years-it's-time-for-a-new-nclb/
- Eccles, J. S., & Wang, M.-T. (2012). Part I commentary: So what is student engagement anyway? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 133-147). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Edwards, L. M., & Lopez, S. J. (2000). *Making Hope Happen for Kids*. Unpublished protocol.
- Elliot, A. J., & McGregor, H. A. (2001). A 2 x 2 achievement goal framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(3), 501-519.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377
- Ett, J. A. (2008). *A study of an outperforming urban high school and the factors which contribute to its increased academic achievement with attention to the contribution of student engagement*. Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Southern California. Available from ProQuest LLC (UMI Number: 3311164)
- Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(2), 117-142.

- Finn, J. D. (1993). School engagement and students at risk. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Finn, J. D., & Voelkl, K. E. (1993). School characteristics related to student engagement. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 62(3), 249-268.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.
- Froh, J. J., Emmons, R. A., Card, N. A., Bono, G., & Wilson, J. A. (2011). Gratitude and the reduced costs of materialism in adolescents. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12, 289-302. doi: 10.1007/s10902-010-9195-9
- Furlong, M. J., & Christenson, S. L. (2008). Engaging students at school and with learning: A relevant construct for all students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 365-368. doi: 10.1002/pits.20302
- Gallagher, M. W., & Lopez, S. J. (2009). Positive expectancies and mental health: Identifying the unique contributions of hope and optimism. *The Journal of Positive Psychology: Dedicated to furthering research and promoting good practice*, 4(6), 548-556. doi: 10.1080/17439760903157166
- Gallup. (2009a). Engagement, performance on standardized tests, and the Gallup Student Poll (pp. 1-2). Omaha, NE: Author.
- Gallup. (2009b). Gallup Student Poll USA national data. Omaha, NE: Author.
- Gallup. (2009c). Hope, academic success, and the Gallup student poll. Omaha, NE: Author.
- Gallup. (2009d). Well-being, success, and the Gallup student poll. Omaha, NE: Author.
- Gallup. (2010a). Gallup Student Poll USA national data. Omaha, NE: Author.
- Gallup. (2010b). *Hope, engagement, and wellbeing in middle schools*. Unpublished raw data.

- Garza, R. n. (2009). Latino and White High School Students' Perceptions of Caring Behaviors. *Urban Education, 44*(3), 297-321. doi: 10.1177/0042085908318714
- Gilman, R., Dooley, J., & Florell, D. (2006). Relative levels of hope and their relationship with academic and psychological indicators among adolescents. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 25*(2), 166-178.
- Gilman, R., & Huebner, E. S. (2003). A review of life satisfaction research with children and adolescents. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*(2), 192-205.
- Gilman, R., Huebner, E. S., & Furlong, M. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of positive psychology in schools*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gordon, G. (2006). *Building engaged schools: Getting the most out of America's classrooms*. New York: Gallup Press.
- Gordon, G. (2013). School leadership linked to engagement and student achievement (pp. 1-24). Washington, D.C.: Gallup.
- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist, 58*(6-7), 466-474.
- Greenspoon, P. J., & Saklofske, D. H. (1998). Confirmatory factor analysis of the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 25*(5), 965-971.

- Griffiths, A.-J., Sharkey, J. D., & Furlong, M. J. (2009). Student engagement and positive school adaptation. In R. Gilman, E. S. Huebner & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools* (pp. 197-211). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Grolnick, W., Farkas, M., Sohmer, R., Michaels, S., & Valsiner, J. (2007). Facilitating motivation in young adolescents: Effects of an after-school program. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 28(4), 332-344. doi: 10.1016/j.appdev.2007.04.004
- Halcomb, E. J., Gholizadeh, L., DiGiacomo, M., Phillips, J., & Davidson, P. M. (2007). Literature review: considerations in undertaking focus group research with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 16(6), 1000-1011. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2006.01760.x
- Hellman, C. M., Pittman, M. K., & Munoz, R. T. (2013). The first twenty years of the will and the ways: An examination of score reliability distribution on Snyder's Dispositional Hope Scale. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14(3), 723-729. doi: 10.1007/s10902-012-9351-5
- Holloway, J. H. (2002). Extracurricular Activities and Student Motivation. *Educational Leadership*, 60(1), 80-81.
- Huebner, E. S. (1991). Initial development of the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale. *School Psychology International*, 12(3), 231-240. doi: 10.1177/0143034391123010
- Huebner, E. S. (1994). Preliminary development and validation of a Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale for children. *Psychological Assessment*, 6(2), 149-158.
- Iyer, R. V., Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., Eisenberg, N., & Thompson, M. (2010). Peer victimization and effortful control: Relations to school engagement and academic achievement. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 56(3), 361-387. doi: 10.1353/mpq.0.005

- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491-525. doi: 10.3102/0034654308325693
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2006). Mental health in adolescence: Is America's youth flourishing? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76(3), 395-402. doi: 10.1037/0002-9432.76.3.395
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2009). The nature and importance of positive mental health in America's adolescents. In R. Gilman, E. S. Huebner & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools* (pp. 9-23). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Keyes, C. L. M., Shmotkin, D., & Ryff, C. D. (2002). Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 1007-1022. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.1007
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Introducing Focus Groups. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 311(7000), 299-302.
- Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). *Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement*. Paper presented at the Tenth Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Kuh, G. D. (2003). The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual framework and overview of psychometric properties. Bloomington, IN: Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Lambert, A. (2007). *Student engagement in high-performing urban high schools: A case study*. Ed.D. 3278370, University of Southern California, United States -- California. Retrieved from

<http://www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1404348311&Fmt=7&clientId=42567&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

- Lee, J., & Shute, V. J. (2010). Personal and social-contextual factors in K-12 academic performance: An integrative perspective on student learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(3), 185-202. doi: 10.1080/00461520.2010.493471
- Lehr, C. A., Hansen, A., Sinclair, M. F., & Christenson, S. L. (2003). Moving beyond dropout towards school completion: An integrative review of data-based interventions. *School Psychology Review*, 32(3), 342-364.
- Lieber, E., & Weisner, T. S. (2013). Dedoose. Web-based qualitative and mixed-methods computer software.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lopez, S. J. (2009). Gallup Student Poll national report. Washington, DC: Gallup, Inc.
- Lopez, S. J. (2010). Making ripples: How principals and teachers can spread hope throughout our schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(2), 40-44.
- Lopez, S. J. (2011a). The Gallup student success model. Washington, DC: Gallup.
- Lopez, S. J. (2011b). Schools could be the happiest places on Earth. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(4), 72-73.
- Lopez, S. J. (2011c). Youth readiness for the future: A report on findings from a representative Gallup Student Poll sample (pp. 1-12). Washington, D.C.: Gallup, Inc.
- Lopez, S. J., Agrawal, S., & Calderon, V. J. (2010). The Gallup Student Poll technical report (pp. 24). Washington, D.C.: Gallup.

- Lopez, S. J., & Calderon, V. J. (2011). Gallup Student Poll: Measuring and promoting what is right with students. In S. I. Donaldson, M. Csikszentmihalyi & J. Nakamura (Eds.), *Applied positive psychology: Improving everyday life, health, schools, work, and society*. In E. A. Fleishman & J. N. Cleveland (Series Eds.), *Series in applied psychology* (pp. 117-133). New York: Routledge.
- Lopez, S. J., Reichard, R. J., Marques, S. C., & Dollwet, M. (2011). *Relation of hope to academic outcomes: A meta-analysis*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Lopez, S. J., Rose, S., Robinson, C., Marques, S. C., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. (2009). Measuring and promoting hope in schoolchildren. In R. Gilman, E. S. Huebner & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools* (pp. 37-50). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Lucas, R. E., Diener, E., & Suh, E., M. (1996). Discriminant validity of well-being measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(3), 616-628. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.71.3.616
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111-131. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111
- Magaletta, P. R., & Oliver, J. M. (1999). The hope construct, will, and ways: Their relations with self-efficacy, optimism, and general well-being. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 55(5), 539-551.
- Marks, H. M. (2000). Student engagement in instructional activity: Patterns in the elementary, middle, and high school years. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(1), 153-184.

- Marques, S. C., Lopez, S. J., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. (2011). "Building hope for the future": A program to foster strengths in middle-school students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(1), 139-152. doi: 10.1007/s10902-009-9180-3
- Marques, S. C., Pais-Ribeiro, J., & Lopez, S. J. (2011). The role of positive psychology constructs in predicting mental health and academic achievement in children and adolescents: A two-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Happiness Studies*. Retrieved from doi:10.1007/s10902-010-9244-4
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach* (2nd ed. Vol. 41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McDermott, D., Hastings, S., Gariglietti, K., Callahan, B., Gingerich, K., & Diamond, K. (1997). *A cross-cultural investigation of hope in children and adolescents*. Paper presented at the 105th Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, IL. Conference Paper retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED412450>
- Merkaš, M., & Brajša-Žganec. (2011). Children with different levels of hope: Are there differences in their self-esteem, life satisfaction, social support, and family cohesion? *Child Indicators Research*. doi: 10.1007/s12187-011-9105-7
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). Common core of data: Search for Public School Districts Retrieved August 1, 2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch>
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: Author.
- No Child Left Behind Act Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2001 January 8, 2002).

- Ozer, E. J., Wolf, J. P., & Kong, C. (2008). Sources of Perceived School Connection Among Ethnically-Diverse Urban Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23*(4), 438-470. doi: 10.1177/0743558408316725
- Pedrotti, J. T., Edwards, L. M., & Lopez, S. J. (2008). Promoting hope: Suggestions for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(2), 100-107.
- Pedrotti, J. T., Lopez, S. J., Edwards, L. M., Bouwkamp, J. A., & Krieschok, T. S. (2001). *Making hope happen: A program for fostering strengths in adolescents*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco.
- Rand, K. L., Martin, A. D., & Shea, A. M. (2011). Hope, but not optimism, predicts academic performance of law students beyond previous academic achievement. *Journal of Research in Personality, 45*(6), 683-686. doi: 10.1016/j.jrp.2011.08.004
- Roeser, R. W., & Eccles, J. S. (1998). Adolescents' perceptions of middle school: Relation to longitudinal changes in academic and psychological adjustment. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 8*(1), 123-158. doi: 10.1207/s15327795jra0801_6
- Rumberger, R. W. (1995). Dropping out of Middle School: A Multilevel Analysis of Students and Schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 583-625.
- Ryan, A. M., & Patrick, H. (2001). The Classroom Social Environment and Changes in Adolescents' Motivation and Engagement during Middle School. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(2), 437-460.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141-166. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069
- Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719
- Sandoval, M. P. (2013). *School culture through the perspectives of student hope, engagement, and well-being*. Ed.D. Doctoral dissertation, Walden University. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database.
- Schaps, E. (2005). The role of supportive school environments in promoting academic success. In S. a. H. K. P. Office (Ed.), *Getting results: developing safe and healthy kids update 5, student health, supportive schools, and academic success*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3), 219-247.
- Seirup, H., & Rose, S. (2011). Exploring the effects of hope on GPA and retention among college undergraduate students on academic probation. *Education Research International*, 2011, 1-7. doi: 10.1155/2011/381429
- Seligman, M. E. P. (1991). *Learned optimism*. New York: A. A. Knopf.

- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410-421. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.60.6.410
- Sharkey, J., You, S., & Schnoebelen, K. (2008). Relations among school assets, individual resilience, and student engagement for youth grouped by level of family functioning. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 402-418. doi: 10.1002/pits
- Sheehan, K., & Rall, K. (2011). Rediscovering hope: Building school cultures of hope for children of poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(3), 44-47.
- Silverman, D., & Marvasti, A. (2008). *Doing qualitative research: A comprehensive guide*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sinclair, M. F., Christenson, S. L., Evelo, D. L., & Hurley, C. (1998). Dropout prevention for youth with disabilities: Efficacy of a sustained school engagement procedure. *Exceptional Children*, 65, 7-24.
- Sinclair, M. F., Christenson, S. L., & Thurlow, M. L. (2005). Promoting school completion of urban secondary youth with emotional or behavioral disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 71(465-482).
- Snyder, C. R. (1994). *The Psychology of Hope: You Can Get There From Here*. New York: The Free Press.
- Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275.
- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., . . . Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-

- differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(4), 570-585.
- Snyder, C. R., Hoza, B., Pelham, W. E., Rapoff, M., Ware, L., Danovsky, M., . . . Stahl, K. J. (1997). The development and validation of the Children's Hope Scale. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 22(3), 399-421. doi: 10.1093/jpepsy/22.3.399
- Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (2007). *Positive psychology: The scientific and practical explorations of human strengths*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Snyder, C. R., Lopez, S. J., Shorey, H. S., Rand, K. L., & Feldman, D. B. (2003). Hope theory, measurements, and applications to school psychology. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2), 122-139.
- Snyder, C. R., Rand, K. L., & Sigmon, D. R. (2005). Hope theory: A member of the positive psychology family. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 257-276). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, C. R., Simpson, S. C., Ybasco, F. C., Borders, T. F., Babyak, M. A., & Higgins, R. L. (1996). Development and validation of the state hope scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(2), 321-335.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Suldo, S. M., Huebner, E. S., Friedrich, A. A., & Gilman, R. (2009). Life satisfaction. In R. Gilman, E. S. Huebner & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools* (pp. 27-35). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.

- Suldo, S. M., Shaffer, E. J., & Riley, K. N. (2008). A social-cognitive-behavioral model of academic predictors of adolescents' life satisfaction. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 23(1), 56-69. doi: 10.1037/1045-3830.23.1.56
- Valle, M. F., Huebner, E. S., & Suldo, S. M. (2004). Further Evaluation of the Children's Hope Scale. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 22(4), 320-337. doi: 10.1177/073428290402200403
- Valle, M. F., Huebner, E. S., & Suldo, S. M. (2006). An analysis of hope as a psychological strength. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(5), 393-406. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2006.03.005
- Van Ryzin, M. (2011). Protective factors at school: Reciprocal effects among adolescents' perceptions of the school environment, engagement in learning, and hope. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 1-13. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9637-7
- Wagner, R., & Harter, J. K. (2006). *12: The elements of great managing*. New York: Gallup Press.
- Woolley, M. E., & Bowen, G. L. (2007). In the context of risk: Supportive adults and the school engagement of middle school students. *Family Relations*, 56(1), 92-104.
- Yazzie-Mintz, E., & McCormick, K. (2012). Finding the humanity in the data: Understanding, measuring, and strengthening student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 743). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods* (4th ed. Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- You, S., Furlong, M. J., Felix, E., Sharkey, J., Tanigawa, D., & Green, J. G. (2008). Relations among school connectedness, hope, life satisfaction, and bully victimization. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 446-460. doi: 10.1002/pits.20308
- You, S., & Sharkey, J. (2009). Testing a developmental-ecological model of student engagement: A multilevel latent growth curve analysis. *Educational Psychology, 29*(6), 659-684. doi: 10.1080/01443410903206815

Appendix A

Dear _____,

My name is Christy Khan and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Kansas. I am writing you this email to request your assistance in locating sites and participants for a study investigating hope, engagement, and well-being in middle schools for my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of my study is to explore what kinds of interventions schools are using to impact students' levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, and is under the direction of James W. Lichtenberg, Ph.D.

I am interested in conducting focus group interviews with your school's faculty members. Eligible participants must be currently certified staff members who have daily contact with middle school students. The participants will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and participate in one focus group. The questionnaire and focus group interview are expected to take a total of 40 minutes to complete. The participants will be referred to by pseudonym during the analysis and discussion of the data.

I am also interested in conducting an observation of the practices and interactions among staff and students at your school. I would like to be taken on a tour of your school to conduct this observation. No identifying information of students or staff will be required during this observation.

If you have any questions you may reach me at ckhan@ku.edu. You can also reach my dissertation chairperson at jlicht@ku.edu. Please contact me if you would like a copy of the IRB approval form.

I would appreciate you forwarding the attached invitation to participate to all eligible faculty members at your school.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Christy Khan, M.S.
Counseling Psychology Doctoral Candidate
Department of Psychology and Research in Education
University of Kansas
ckhan@ku.edu

Appendix B

Gallup Student Poll – GSP*

1. Please imagine a ladder with the steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. (Presented with a ladder graphic)

Worst Possible												Best Possible
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?
 On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	Don't Know
2. I know I will graduate from high school.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
3. There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
4. I can think of many ways to get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
5. I energetically pursue my goals.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
6. I can find lots of ways around any problem.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
7. I know I will find a good job after I graduate.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
8. I have a best friend at school.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
9. I feel safe in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
10. My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
11. At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
12. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
13. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student.	1	2	3	4	5	0	
14. In the last month, I volunteered my time to help others.	1	2	3	4	5	0	

Please think about yesterday, from the morning until the end of the day. Think about where you were, what you were doing, who you were with, and how you felt as you respond to the next six items.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
15. Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?	1	2	0
16. Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?	1	2	0
17. Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?	1	2	0
18. Did you have enough energy to get things done yesterday?	1	2	0
19. Do you have health problems that keep you from doing things other people your age can do?	1	2	0
20. If you are in trouble, do you have family or friends you can count on whenever you need them?	1	2	0

*Scoring of these items is proprietary.

Copyright © 2009-2013 Gallup, Inc.

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me your first name and a word or image that comes to your mind when you think about your students' readiness for the future?
2. How much do you feel like you can influence your students' readiness for the future? Why?
3. How has your school used the data from the Gallup Student Poll?
4. How does your school try to increase hope in your students?
 - a. (follow-up) How does your school help students set and reach their goals?
 - b. (follow-up) When students encounter thoughts, feelings, or situations that prevent them from reaching their goals, how does your school help students find ways around those obstacles?
 - c. (follow-up) Do you believe your school's efforts are working? Why or why not?
5. How does your school try to increase engagement in your students?
 - a. (follow-up) How does your school encourage students to be enthusiastic about school
 - b. (follow-up) How does your school encourage students to get involved in school?
 - c. (follow-up) Do you believe your school's efforts are working? Why or why not?
6. How does your school address the well-being of your students?
 - a. (follow-up) How does your school promote respect between and among students and staff?
 - b. (follow-up) How does your school help students who need social support?
 - c. (follow-up) Do you believe your school's efforts are working? Why or why not?
7. As you know, I am investigating how schools are promoting hope, engagement, and well-being among their students. Think back on your experiences working with students this past year. What advice would you give other educators who want to learn how to address their students' levels of hope, engagement, and well-being?
8. Is there anything else that anyone feels that we should have talked about but didn't?

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

The Department of Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

The purpose of this study is to determine what kinds of interventions schools are using to impact students' levels of hope, engagement, and well-being. You will be asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute focus group discussion about how you and your school are addressing hope, engagement, and well-being in your student population. The focus group will be videotaped and audio taped. The tapes will be used by the researchers only and will be stored in a locked cabinet.

The content of the focus group questions should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of how schools are attempting to improve the hope, engagement, and well-being of their students.

Participants will not be paid for their participation. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary.

Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. The researchers will use a pseudonym instead of your name. The researchers will not share information about you unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Christina L. Khan, M.S., Department of Psychology

and Research in Education, 1122 West Campus Road, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Room 621, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this consent form.

Thank you for your time, cooperation, and participation in our research.

Sincerely,

Christina L. Khan, M.S.
Principal Investigator
Department of Psychology
& Research in Education
621 Joseph R. Pearson Hall
1122 West Campus Road
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
ckhan@ku.edu

James W. Lichtenberg, Ph.D.
Faculty Supervisor
Department of Psychology
& Research in Education
621 Joseph R. Pearson Hall
1122 West Campus Road, Room 214C
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
jlicht@ku.edu

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire

Name: _____

Years of teaching experience: _____

Gender: _____

Years teaching this grade level: _____

Age: _____

Years teaching at this school: _____

Race/Ethnicity:

- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White or European-American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ Hispanic or Latina/Latino
- ☐ Biracial
- ☐ Multiracial
- ☐ Other: *(please specify)* _____

Please list your degree(s) earned: *(e.g., B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ed.S., Ph.D.)*

Please list the grade level(s) and course(s) you have taught in the past year: *(e.g., sixth grade social studies)*

Appendix F

Codebook

Code	Description/Example	Frequency by School		
		PRMS	WLMS	SBMS
Administrator Characteristics (AD)	Staff perceptions of administrator characteristics	82	6	6
AD-Accepts responsibility for mistakes	<i>“And [the principal] admits when he makes mistakes (all agree) or when he slips up on something. He’s the first one to say I’m so sorry I messed that up. I’ll do it better next time.”</i>	1	0	0
AD-Builds relationships with staff	<i>“I remember [the principal] making the comment that he wanted to build relationships, so not only between him and us, but us with each other and us with kids and him with kids and that’s been the goal this year.”</i>	5	1	0
AD-Calm	Teacher C: <i>“And [the assistant principal is so great, she just, like you said one day, she just never gets, she never gets all worked up.”</i> Teacher E: <i>“She just doesn’t get in a flap. She’ll just say, now, well, ok, it’s going to be fine here.”</i>	4	0	0
AD-Clear expectations	<i>“Our principal and vice principal both work very well together. They had a vision, it was you know described to everybody what they wanted, and everybody bought in and it’s just worked.”</i>	6	0	1
AD-Compassionate	<i>“I think the administration here is particularly good about projecting um the feeling that no matter what happens, we’re in this together. That you will be treated fairly, um, and with compassion, but yet be held to a standard.”</i>	7	0	0
AD-Engaged	<i>“But [the principal will] just walk in, and see what’s going on, and interact with a kid, and say, ‘Hey, what are you doing today?’ And um, in a very caring way, not like, ‘What are you doing? Are you doing what you’re supposed to be doing?’ but, ‘Hey, what’s going on? What are you working on?’</i>	5	0	0
AD-Expresses	<i>“[The principal] also made a list for</i>	2	0	0

gratitude	<i>us of thanksgiving of the quality that he sees in us that he's thankful for in each one of us. And that, you know, it may also make you think about the kids that way too."</i>			
AD-Focused on building relationships with students	<i>"I think that they, our administration, really emphasized you know we need to do whatever it takes, whether it's you know building relationships, or opening up that much time with them. And I think that that's a big part of our school."</i>	0	1	2
AD-Focus on well-being	<i>"Since our principal got here we're much more ah...you know, her focus is on uh...physical fitness, you know, eating properly. I mean she's a marathon runner, and I think we've done a good job across the school of thinking that's kind of an important thing and I think that helps kids respect themselves."</i>	0	0	1
AD-Fun	<i>"I feel like the faculty meeting is such a celebration, with the Helmet of Hilarity"</i>	2	0	0
AD-Good communicator	<i>"When [the assistant principal] wants to tell you anything that maybe you need, you know, to improve, she'll say "Teacher A, you always know how to do, you know how to handle this. I don't need to tell you this, but I'll just..." you know, and she just says it in such a kind way, you think, "Oh my gosh, I'll be glad to do that."</i>	1	0	0
AD-Good leadership	<i>"We've got great leadership."</i>	4	0	0
AD-High visibility	<i>"And [the principal] also has been, um, really visible. I've never had a principal just walk in at a random time, ever, as much as he has."</i>	2	0	0
AD-Openness	<i>"They don't just make us change everything because they're new, you know. It's like if it's already working well we can keep the good, we don't throw out the baby with the bathwater."</i>	1	0	0
AD-Positivity	<i>"[The principal] helped make a real positive atmosphere."</i>	10	1	1
AD-Problem-solver	<i>"And within the classroom, you don't feel intimidated or you don't feel as if you're a failure if you go for help. Say I'm having trouble with this</i>	3	1	0

	<i>student, [the principal will say] ‘Oh, what can we do to help you? We know you guys work hard, and we know...I mean that’s our job.’ That’s the first time I’ve seen that in a long time.”</i>			
AD-Protects staff	<i>“They’ve also tried to pull out all the B.S. We’ve had so many principals that just want to fill every second of your time, they want you to document every second you’re doing, they want to watch you like a, and then they jump from one issue to the other and you don’t know what’s important, what’s not important, and they’ve really cut back on that. They’ve tried to focus on a few things well, instead of a million things that never go anywhere. Which I think is good leadership. You know they’re trying to pull back on a lot of that.”</i>	2	0	0
AD-Resolves conflict without “drama”	<i>“If you know if some negative things need to be addressed, then he’s using the right channels to do it, and just, you know, just stayin’ positive no matter what you’re feeling or what...and, you know, getting back to leadership.”</i>	6	0	0
AD-Respects staff	<i>“When there’s, like, directives coming down to us from the administration, I don’t ever feel like they’re given disrespectfully. I think the administration does a really good job of respecting our time and respecting our professional judgment and opinions and the way that we run our classrooms. And I think that is very helpful.”</i>	12	0	0
AD-Treats staff like family	<i>“like a real, um, sense of family”</i>	1	0	0
AD-Trusts staff	<i>“You’ve got to trust the people who work for you.”</i>	4	0	0
AD-Vision	<i>“I think that buy-in and that clear vision has to come from the top too, and so I think, I mean, hopefully the leadership will say, you know, ‘This is our agreed upon vision and if it’s not your vision, then maybe you need to put in for transfer.’”</i>	3	2	1
AD-Welcoming	<i>“You always feel comfortable and they just kind of put things aside and</i>	1	0	0

	<i>listen. You know? It's great."</i>			
Encourage positive interactions	<i>"He also did a lot of team building too with the staff which is really, really important. I find that in other buildings when that doesn't happen people get real separated and you don't come together and you begin to feel isolated. So, especially maybe as an EXPLO staff, that may happen a little bit more because we do have not so many, um, groups, but we have our own group, but not like the grade levels do."</i>	7	2	1
Fun	<i>"One year I know one teacher did a bunch of, um, 'Minute to Win It.' Is that what it was called? All: mmm hmm B: activities, and so, you know, that's something that's totally crazy, totally fun, and as long as they've done their job up to that point, then here's the reward at the end of that time frame."</i>	9	1	3
Gallup Student Poll Data (GSP)	Staff awareness and use of GSP data	29	31	28
GSP-Confusion with other measures	<i>"If I remember right, it's part of the ACT? Is that what that is?"</i>	6	0	7
GSP-Connect to staff intervention	<i>"And on top of that we also created teacher Cougar Crews so that on early releases at the beginning of our time together, we have everybody plan an activity amongst just for the teachers to lead and kind of build, team-building. But also we took the Gallup survey and we made it for teachers and we had our teachers take that. And so we can kind of have a temperature on the building and know how our teachers are feeling at certain times."</i>	0	2	0
GSP-Connect to student intervention	<i>"Um, two years ago, so two school years ago we started a Cougar Crew time every early release, which is, what, probably have it 11 to 12 times a year. Um, where all of the students have been split into groups of 15 or so and one teacher, um, those kids go to that teacher every single time. This year we're doing a multi-grade level, so your sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, and what we're trying</i>	1	13	4

	<i>to do is build that Cougar Crew time around hope, engagement, and well-being issues. Um, this year we really, last year we focused on what [our school] stands for, kind of our school mission statement.</i>			
GSP-Discussed in leadership team	<i>“One of the activities that we did, um, when we were actually at leadership team looking at um the data from the Gallup Poll, um, one of the areas we were low in is kids said that they weren’t getting recognized. And we had to talk about, ‘Well what is recognition?’ and how that’s different among different people. And so, where I might say, ‘Good job,’ that might mean nothing to you, but a sticker might be, on a paper, or you know, ‘W is it that excites the kids or makes them feel like they’ve been recognized?’ And so we were supposed to have those discussions then in the Cougar Crews so we could find out.</i>	1	7	0
GSP-Discussed in faculty meeting	<i>“We also had a faculty meeting at the beginning of the year. Um, we came up with some ideas...and we saw those as something worth thinking about what we could do better...as a faculty to support the well-being within school.”</i>	0	4	0
GSP-Don’t know	<i>“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”</i>	20	1	9
GSP-Have not used data	<i>Teacher C: “We haven’t done anything this year.” Teacher A: “We haven’t touched the list this year, have we?” Teacher C: “Other than just, when they responded at the beginning of the year, we said, ‘Do we know something about this kid?’” Teacher A: “Really?” Teacher C: “I think we’ve done, I think we’ve answered a few couple of them, but not as in depth as we’ve done before. Nope. Nope. That would be crammed in before May.” (laughs)</i>	0	0	3
GSP-Minimal awareness of GSP	<i>“All I know is they took something like this because of guided study. I took them to a computer lab to do it.</i>	1	2	5

	<i>But we haven't seen any results, at least I haven't.</i>			
GSP-Use to evaluate effectiveness of intervention	<i>"I think that's the that's the goal is, you know, it's this year we kind of wanted to see how it would work out and what we could do, and I think the goal is to look at the Gallup data and kind of use that as how we're going to structure them next year."</i>	0	2	0
Inter-staff Relationships (ISR)	Descriptions of how staff relate to administration and other staff members	66	15	6
ISR-Admire leaders	<i>"I admire [the assistant principal]; I trust her."</i>	7	0	0
ISR-Buy-in	<i>"And [the principal] just treats us so professionally, and that's why everybody does what they're supposed to do and nobody leaves early, and everybody does, you know, gets here to school on time and they try to do their part, and be in the hallways, and just all the things that any administrator would be thrilled of."</i>	9	3	0
ISR-Camaraderie	<i>"It trickles down uh to teachers have to get along as well and have to show that you know, there's a camaraderie between us and that trickles down to students."</i>	5	4	2
ISR-Collaboration	<i>"This team works together really well. So if somebody needs something, the band needs to go to practice, we don't mind, the art fair needs cookies, we don't mind. I feel like we all work together and the kids see that and they cooperate and do what they need to do."</i>	4	4	0
ISR-Collective self-efficacy	<i>"We care about each other. And because we care about each other, that also flows over to the kids, and we view ourselves as on team. It's not you're doing better than I am, or as two math teachers, well, you're scores are higher than mine. That has nothing to do with anything. It just has to do with we're here together and we all are here to meet the needs of the kids as a team."</i>	5	0	1
ISR-Feel supported by staff	<i>"I personally feel very supported, um, I feel supported by this team of</i>	13	0	0

	<i>teachers, and by the administration.”</i>			
ISR-Honest communication	<i>“I think this is a team that is on board with each other, which then is very honest with parents, and because of the way our team operates like that, it gets the parents to truly see where their child lies, and so I think it helps make that progress sometimes go a little bit quicker also.”</i>	2	2	0
ISR-Irritated with other staff	<i>“Well, that’s why there’s two people not here (deep sigh).”</i>	0	0	2
ISR-No “drama”	<i>“So, um, and even, like, if I go in for advice on something when I’m kind of getting ready to go to war, there’ve been a couple times this year when I got kind of pushed and I think, ‘I’m just going to have to...’ you know, and I go talk to them and I end up coming back down a little bit and realize that I don’t have to do that. And, like you say, it’s a kinder, gentler approach. It’s how I want to be treated as an employee”</i>	2	0	0
ISR-Positive	<i>“I was thinking we’re all very positive people and I think that impacts you know how the students are.”</i>	7	0	0
ISR-Sense of family	<i>“We often refer to our faculty as family and um, many of us have been here for many years and gone through joys and sorrows.”</i>	2	0	1
ISR-Trust leaders	<i>“I feel comfortable going to either [the principal or assistant principal] to ask for things that I need, or support, or help in dealing with a situation, or just hey, can you come into my classroom and observe X, Y, and Z? And that’s not something that I’ve ever had in another building where I’ve felt completely comfortable going to either the assistant or the principal to talk about that stuff.”</i>	8	0	0
ISR-Willing to ask for help	<i>“Don’t be afraid to ask for help, or, if you are struggling with a situation a student, I think we’ve, that’s something that’s so easy for us to come in and say “how did you deal with whatever situation you might be struggling with?” and you know be</i>	2	2	0

	<i>open to somebody giving you some suggestions to try."</i>			
Interventions (IV)	Specific school-wide interventions in place to boost student hope, engagement, and well-being	86	95	77
IV-Assemblies	<i>"And it to make it more tangible we do some assemblies or the kids have the opportunity to see the those...um...that situations where hope exists. You know we have had student who have had accidents, like driving under the influence, a lot of that. So those students came here to talk with our students and to share their hope for the future and how they would have done things better. So I think that we do several things to help."</i>	3	6	1
IV-Bus for students without transportation	<i>Teacher C: "They have a...an extra bus that takes 'em home..." Teacher B: "That is important for..." Teacher C: "PTO. So many of our kids' parents are working, um, they don't have transportation...it's a little bit too far to walk..."</i>	0	0	1
IV-Connect to community	<i>"We've started a community service, Teacher A and I have, and it's been a great experience. Um, the kids have worked. We did it with a tiered method, where we started here, and then we worked within the community, and then ended up with Heart-to-Heart, which is more global. So, we've been able to engage them that way. And they've been really excited about it."</i>	2	4	1
IV-Counseling services	<i>"Well, our counselors, somebody had mentioned the lunch groups that we do. I mean, our counselors, the kids who participate in the Star Wars group and the Girl Talk group are often times those kids who have those social, socially inept characteristics maybe, who need some more coaching and socialization."</i>	10	5	7
IV-Engagement opportunities	<i>"I think extracurricular activities are really important. We do a great job with intramurals, we...and that's been a clear goal of ours...try to find something that a kid can connect with</i>	11	11	5

	<i>outside of their classes. Whether it's a Cougar Night, just coming to Cougar Night socializing, whether it's being in the play, whether it's you know, doing sport, being in all the clubs that we do, but, so that's, we've made a conscious effort to try to do that and EXPLO a few years ago was even um, when we were doing, one of our learning targets, our goals was to try to gather data and see if every kid in the school was engaged in something. So that's an engagement too, not just academic engagement, but engaged in, in the community, the school."</i>			
IV-Extensive availability of support	<i>"I think our school bends over backwards to help kids stay up current on their homework. If a child gets behind, they can temporarily alter their schedule to get them help, they have after school help, they have Saturday school help. They don't let a kid get so far behind that it's well hopeless."</i>	7	7	8
IV-Focus on respect for diversity	<i>"I think we've got a couple things, that are new things, like um, diversity type, you know. I think we're getting to be more focused on that diversity and how that looks and how that, you know, can help in how we can accept other people and that type of thing and respect their views."</i>	0	0	1
IV-Food for students on free and reduced lunch	<i>"And for a lot of these kids we're not just meeting their academic needs, right? We're meeting their physical needs by the backpacks that go home on the weekends. So just seeing the child as a whole child."</i>	0	0	2
IV-Goal-setting	<i>"Every quarter I have them write their goals and then especially when they're going into festival, I have them write the expectations they have and afterwards look at it and see if they were met. Have them evaluate their performances along the way. But I think we could do more of it."</i>	0	0	4
IV-Guided study classes	<i>"I think, too, we have our smaller guided studies classes set up to where if we know there is a small handful of students that are...that need a lot</i>	0	4	0

	<i>more one on one attention and that day by day assistance that they are put into that smaller guided study class to where they are able then to have that smaller one-on-one time with the teacher too. Either whether it's checking their grades or just getting help on one assignment or, I mean, just a simple conversation just to get them going in the right direction."</i>			
IV-Incentives	<i>"And then sixth grade does a similar thing, only any time that they happen to have a specific class every other Friday or on a Friday, then if they don't have any missing work and haven't received too many signatures, then they get to have some free time with their friends, or go outside, or just play some group games, or that kind of thing. So it gives them, other than always in our classrooms trying to impress upon them that everything that we do has value, they also get to see short term, 'OK, if I do my job, and I do what they ask me to do, then I get to do what I want to do.' And you know, so its, I think that's a little bit motivating."</i>	7	0	6
IV-Inclusive extracurricular activities	<i>"We do have great participation in sports, we have musical and play, we have great participation. Our music programs are awesome, I mean, if you come in here before school there's something going on several different places. We have clubs and FCA and um, you know, after school tutoring is basically four or five to one or a one-on-one a lot of times and trying to make them available. We have the library open in the morning and the gym open in the morning, um trying to have them to have some reason they want to enjoy coming to school."</i>	2	12	7
IV-Instructional engagement practice	<i>"And that goes back to even the way that, um, teachers teach is to engage all students. So I think especially at this school and from what I see around our district is we're way past that point where the teacher stands in</i>	0	12	6

	<i>front of a group of kids and talks at them. Um, it's all about facilitating the participation and the group and getting them actively involved in learning so they are engaged in the lesson."</i>			
IV-Making learning relevant	<i>"I think a lot of us are trying to make, you know, as you were saying, more um connections to their own lives. You know, with, with a generation of kids who are plugged in from the time they wake up in the morning till they go to bed at night, we can't expect them to come to school and not have any technology at their resource, or not have any connection to the outside world. So, you know, instead of allowing them, what do I say, it's not like we have cell phones sitting at their desks, but we have to be talking about things that are relevant to their lives and make those connections in order to keep them engaged."</i>	0	4	3
IV-Mastery focus	<i>Teacher A: "And too, kids have the opportunity to retake tests..." Teacher D: "And redo assignments, ah hmmm," Teacher A: "You get to do it again and so there's still hope I can still master this concept and move on."</i>	0	3	0
IV- Intervention/Problem-solving meetings	<i>"And our problem-solving, we meet weekly to talk about students and what their issues are so it's not just this student's failing, it's also this student seems to be struggling with their friends, this...and what can we do as a team that's not, you know, we are trying to look at their whole, the whole person, all the students and which ones really need help and...it's, you know we will have them come in and talk to them or their parents come in and talk to them or hook someone up, you know, 'Hey, you get along really good with...can you talk to 'em?' you know, or the counselor, you, you try to use a lot of different strategies to help individual students with their individual needs."</i>	10	6	11
IV-Active PTO	<i>"We have a strong PTO. Um, they</i>	0	0	2

	<i>support the, um, community closet. We send backpacks home with kids every weekend to make sure they have food to eat."</i>			
IV-Positive discipline	<i>"At school, why, when a student's having a problem with something, if they've got a roadblock it's you know blocking their path to being successful or achieving what they want, we as school-wide, we call it Give 'Em Five, and we talk to that student on an individual basis, and we kind of build them up, say good things, then we explain the problem and explain you know, how they can go about doing better. And um, you know, we do that supposedly for behaviors, but, you know, I suppose too, you know, we use that same method to talk them up about if there's something they can't do, maybe talk about some things they can do and how they can you know get past that that goal and give them hope that they can do it."</i>	8	6	1
IV-Positive morning announcements	<i>"I'd say our morning announcements is huge because our morning announcements are lengthy, but they're really positive and they're motivating. [The principal] always has some type of little...words of wisdom. Kind of a little lesson almost."</i>	0	0	2
IV-Professional development	<i>"I think it from a leadership standpoint something that we committed to was um once a month during this meeting time is providing or giving the opportunity to step back away from the professional development of the content and just talk about hope, well-being, and engagement. And once a month this time is spent looking at ourselves, you know, what can we do to help one another?"</i>	0	4	3
IV-Programs	<i>Teacher D: "Well, our counselors did a thing called Mix-It Up at lunch." Teacher I: "Mmmhmm. That's huge." Teacher D: "It's a huge thing and it's</i>	9	2	1

	<p><i>a national program and the work that they did this year got the school recognized as one of the top schools in the nation for the Mix-It Up concept, which is getting kids to mix-it up at lunch. Sit with kids that they wouldn't normally sit with, and then there's a little laminated sheet that's got the questions for the day. So you ask somebody, you know, 'What pets do you have?' Well, it's you know, trivial information, but I'm still getting to know something about you in a secure setting, and it's just making them talk to each other a little bit more."</i></p> <p><i>Teacher E: "They take a lot of pictures, and then the kids' pictures are posted outside the counselors' door so they can see who everybody was mixed-up with. And they love seeing their pictures on the wall. I mean there are pictures of kids all over the building."</i></p>			
IV-Provide examples of hopeful people	<p><i>"The mom that covered her kids in the tornado and then she lost her legs, you know, I try to give them perspective. Like, 'Look at her, she's still smiling, she's hopeful. You know, you know, the day you think your life stinks, you know, look at, if she can still be positive, so can you' type thing. And make them think outside of themselves, which, yeah."</i></p>	0	1	1
IV-School-wide relationship building intervention	<p><i>"We haven't done it this year at least to my knowledge, but every year before then we had asked the kids to answer these questions...about if you had one person to talk to at school, put their name down, so we knew, like, they tracked, like, which students didn't have someone to talk to here or at home and then, like, worked on making those connections to those in need kids based upon that."</i></p>	0	2	6
IV-School-wide student recognition	<p><i>"We have the front bulletin board with those pictures of those kids who have received um, the Top Dog tokens and also the, um the Ten Dollar Tuesday, is another program that we have where we recognize kids. Just</i></p>	14	2	1

	<i>draw them out of the hat and just for doing what they're supposed to be doing."</i>			
IV-Seminar time	<i>"And that's the only way I feel like it can be positive situation for kids is that they have to feel comfortable. It has to be small enough that they can share. They have to know that, you know, if we do it in a great big large group we lose them. Especially with middle school kids, that's the nature of our beast that we teach. So you know this Cougar Crew time that we have is very beneficial to try to get this information out to kids. So I...I think that part of our school is positive."</i>	1	9	0
IV-Talk about hope with students	<i>"Well, I think what, um, Teacher F, or what we talked about earlier is that we recognize [hope] as something that is important and we need to work on and so we have developed a [seminar] time, while it may not be as much as we would like, but it is a significant time that we set aside to talk with our kids about hope and try to try to build that in them."</i>	0	2	0
IV-Teacher recognition	<i>"And then [the principal] also does like, uh, T.O.F.U., so for staff to staff, which I'll be honest I'm really poorly at writing them, but Teacher E's really good. She, um...it's like a way to nominate another staff member for um, you know just to thank them for something. You do it all across the building. And then when we have, like, staff meetings and early release, like, he'll draw out one of those yellow forms, and then let the nominator read, like, who they thanked. It's just kind of a way to give a little bit of recognition to a peer. And I think that outside the rewards stuff, I feel like at staff meetings it's not, like, I don't know, I still think it goes back to the environment and the culture he's built to establish the well-being among the staff, which then filters down to the kids."</i>	2	0	0

No Drama	<i>"I think it goes back to what we were saying about the positive atmosphere. We have a system in place, our discipline system, where the kids have consequences, but they have lots of chances to mess up, or to redeem themselves, and I think, and it's very non-emotional, I mean it's just, it's just laid out there."</i>	1	0	0
Purposeful hiring practices	<i>"[The principal's very purposeful about building a staff that has an attitude that mirrors his. I mean, the rest of you folks might have heard this in your interviews, too. He asked very specific questions and gave us scenarios of what would you do in this situation? A child comes and this is what's going on, what do you do? What do you say? So he was looking for a specific type of person that will model, or mirror what he is modeling for us.]"</i>	3	0	0
Safety	<i>"I think we do what we can to try to make them feel safe, as part of that, too. Just that, the kids who might not have a great home life or something, we help them out."</i>	1	4	1
Sense of belonging	<i>"Well, I think it's really important kids this age and through high school have a group they can belong to. A positive group. I think it helps give them a sense of identity and identify with their school."</i>	4	5	1
Staff Characteristics (SC)	Observations of attitudes, beliefs, and values of staff	0	19	21
SC-Conflicted sense of obligations	<i>"We do a lot with, um, outside of, you know, the school week. We have a Super Saturday, kind of like an assessment deal, which, of all of these things that we are doing for kids, um, it's a double-edged sword because you want to be there, you, you want to be seen and you want to make that connection, and you can sometimes and sometimes you can't, and I think as a staff that's difficult because it, it weighs on you when your responsibilities are outside of the work week, and with kids its always a fine line you walk."</i>	0	0	1

SC-Feels unappreciated by students	<i>"So if they appreciate something we might have done for them, very few will ever let you know that (laughs). Even though I think we do affect them, it's, um, you can't, you can't do this job to be commended for your work by middle schoolers" (laughs).</i>	0	0	1
SC-Feels unsupported by parents	<i>"I think we can only prepare them as much as their parents will let us prepare them. I think my biggest obstacles have to do with a lack of support. I have many, many kids who I have a lot of support for, but you know, you can only send so many emails home, call home so many times, have so many parent meetings. So when I'm preparing kids for the future, I can only do it as much as their parents will allow me to prepare them."</i>	0	0	1
SC-Flexibility	<i>"It's being flexible...it's getting into their world, and when their world is constantly changing, we have as teachers have to constantly be willing to be flexible and adapt to that need. Cause if we're not doing that then they're not engaged."</i>	0	2	1
SC-Frustrated	<i>"And I think, I think our minds are really skewed this year because of the group of students we have this year (laughs). Um, I think if you, I think our, I mean especially those of you, like Teacher G, who have worked with this group for two years in a row now, um, this is a really challenging high needs group that on the Gallup data it's just amazing how they stand out with the lack of problem-solving skills, they're lack of respect for each other and the feeling of respect. So, I think we see that and deal with that on a daily basis from them. Um, if, we problem-solve about the same kids over and over and over again because they can't take control or they can't take care of things on their own and then so it kind of falls to us. And I think that's where....so I think we're...I feel like we sound so</i>	0	6	3

	<i>negative and hopeless about this group, but I think it's just this group in so many ways."</i>			
SC-Impatient	<i>"Can I also ask how long this will take?"</i>	0	0	3
SC-Mixed feelings about intervention effectiveness	<i>"I mean, I think went down is they, I mean, they are attempting to use our Cougar Crew time as an opportunity to...engage students and increase their...well-being. I'm...I have mixed feelings about it."</i>	0	4	0
SC-Pressed for time	<i>"We don't have time for them [students] to be creative, honestly."</i>	0	0	6
SC-Reflective	<i>"I thought about the thing about the, the students not feeling respected and, and um, and that was good for me to think about and served me to reflect on, um, um, how maybe I'm perceived as a teacher, um, trying to help them get better, but um, how do they, how do they perceive that? Or do they think that I'm just sort of, do they, am I, am I, um, do I give off a lot more negative than positive feedback to my students? Do they take that as disrespect? You know? So, it's been a good thing for me as a teacher to, to reflect on that and my role and how they feel as far as being respected and all that kind of thing."</i>	0	6	0
SC-Stressed	<i>"Kind of along those lines of happy teachers who and what they said about having time to connect with kids, um, one of the frustrations that we have been seeing more here is that they give us a lot of, um, other extra things to do that are not really directly connected with working with kids, and um, we kind of look at it as sort of busywork, and like now, if we didn't have to do this and this and this, we would have time to maybe take care of some of these other problems that directly impact the kids and, and so that's kind of a little bit of a morale problem (all agree and nod), you know, where you just feel like, well gosh, we spend so much time on this other periphery stuff that doesn't seem all that important, you</i>	0	1	5

	<i>know, so it would be nice if we could clean some of those things off our plate and then be able to have more energy and time to work with and help kids."</i>			
Staff-Student Relationships (SSR)	Descriptions of how staff build relationships with students	89	101	74
SSR-Apologize for mistakes	<i>"When I can say, 'I'm sorry,' when I've really truly done something that's not appropriate or that I've made a mistake and I can laugh at myself and say, 'Hey, I really messed up there' (others agree). They seem to see that real side of you and then that kind of opens up the opportunity for them to feel comfortable because kids still think that we stay here and grade papers and stay here overnight (others join in) and we shower here and you know (all laughs)."</i>	0	1	0
SSR-Care about students	<i>"I also think that the kids can tell that they're in a building where the adults care about them. It gets very apparent that the teachers here are engaged in their jobs and that they want to be here and care about the kids' success, which makes a big difference."</i>	3	2	6
SSR-Clearly communicate expectations	<i>"It comes back to like this team and this grade level is that there's, um, true rewards and consequences and the students were made aware of that from day one and they know that we follow through. And so I thought it was kind of cute one day a kid said, 'Yeah, you just don't put up with my shenanigans.' And so (all laugh) they know that this is where the line is and this is what you expect of me and I think that's what's helped make the progress and helped some of them turn around."</i>	8	4	0
SSR-Create safety	<i>"I think that makes them feel like this is a...I think it creates an environment where they feel more comfortable and safe, which, you know, promotes some of those other things, those other buzz words you're talking about, like hope and whatever else you're saying."</i>	2	0	0
SSR-Encourage responsibility	<i>"I also think helping the kids figure out how to take responsibility for"</i>	6	5	0

	<i>their own behaviors and the things that are happening to them."</i>			
SSR-Encourage student strengths	<i>"And I think we do try to try different things, different options for kids to help them find their strengths."</i>	1	8	0
SSR-Encourage students	<i>"You know, the other thing that comes to mind, too, is what we were talking about at lunch with the particular person who was frustrated with your, um, circuits and you're like, 'You can do it. I know you can. You can find a way.' And just letting them be frustrated and try to find a way and try to find it within them."</i>	6	1	1
SSR-Foster trust	<i>"I think the first for me is always you have to have a relationship with the students first. Getting them to trust you, you know, not being their friend but knowing that they can come to you and you're not going to bite their head off, you know."</i>	1	1	2
SSR-Future-oriented	<i>"But beyond also looking. And also I think that um one thing some of us have been doing is trying to um attach that to um attach their learning now to things in the future. Um, and that...that directly came from the Gallup idea...or the results that we got was that, um, um, tying, showing them there's more, more to what they're doing right now that's going to be useful later on. I know that's one way we've been trying to incorporate that, too."</i>	7	4	0
SSR-High expectations	<i>"I'm pretty tough. I feel like these kids need to learn that there's guidelines, there's deadlines, not everybody's going to have an A. You know, and our district, for a long time preached everybody's going to make an A. And that's not reality. So I feel like in my class they get a reality check, you know work, hard work pays off, and you gotta, um, if you don't work hard, you know, you don't make the grade."</i>	6	0	0
SSR-Intentional relationship building	<i>"I would say that it's finding out the students who don't feel like they have connections, and then staff members who feel like maybe they do have, and</i>	2	18	16

	<i>it doesn't, it's not just classroom teachers. It also goes to the custodians, and the cafeteria staff and the office staff. If there's a staff member that feels like you know what I thought I couldn't find a connection with that kid. And so, we make sure that those students who don't feel like they have a connection are targeted so to speak by a staff member so that, that we know that there's at least one adult reaching out on a daily basis to ask them how they are and to check in with them and that kind of thing."</i>			
SSR-Invest time	<i>"I was going to say, um, time, um, you know, we are always so busy and so about teaching, what we get to teach, that I find that if I would just stop for 30 seconds and take a basketball and catch a shot or something from a kid that's shooting they light up. It's like, 'Wow, he actually can do something besides yell at me (laughs).' So time, I think give 'em some time."</i>	2	5	1
SSR-Make connections	<i>"I think it starts with being observant. It starts with being a presence outside of the classroom. And it also has to deal with building relationships. Bottom line, you've got to be able to talk to kids. And when they know that you're interested, they're willing to open up and tell you more. Um, and you know, get them as involved as possible. And I know that takes form in a lot of different ways and people go about it differently, but you know, being able to have conversations with kids and treat them, you know, back to that whole respect thing. If they know that they're going to be on somewhat equal ground with you, at least in terms of respect, then I think that really helps them to be able to let you into their world a little bit."</i>	6	9	12
SSR-Make students comfortable	<i>"Yeah, it's a friendly place that I think feels comfortable for most kids. I think we all go out of our way to speak to kids, whether they're our kids or not."</i>	3	3	5

SSR-Make students feel successful	<i>"I think that we try and make them feel successful somehow. I mean, I'm thinking about one student in particular, we said she has no vision of herself in the future, and we've feel like we've accomplished something because now she does, it seems like, like as months have passed. So I think that we try to help them find success somewhere so they can feel positive and look forward."</i>	0	5	3
SSR-Model positive behaviors	<i>"We have to be you know great role models and, um, constantly be making, you know, the right decisions and being patient and um, you know, not, um, not letting our emotions get the best of us. We're just always trying to show you know what positive behavior is, responsible behavior is, and, um, what it means to be a good person and a good citizen."</i>	3	5	1
SSR-Model problem-solving	<i>"I think we do a great job of, of individualizing um making those connections with a kid to an adult and helping that that um kid try to solve their own problems. I mean we do some handholding and things like around here, but I think that, at least from my opinion, we do a lot of problem solving. 'How can you get around this, er, how, you know, what are you gonna, what are your options? Let's look at your options.'"</i>	8	9	1
SSR-Model respect	<i>"Also I think we respect each other. When they see us kind of joking around with each other and having fun and um like enjoying our work and so I think I think that translates to the kids that you know if we're having fun then they have fun, and they treat each other and us with the same respect that they see us treating each other."</i>	4	3	2
SSR-Open communication with students	<i>"I know we've tried, with the kids that really said they didn't have an adult advocate, um, we all said, 'OK, well I'll try to, since I have this student I have interaction, I'll try to you know make a daily positive contact, um, just keep, you know, try to keep opening"</i>	0	3	7

	<i>that communication.' I mean, some of them aren't very receptive to it; they're pretty closed. But if you can just find that one little instant, you know, it might make the difference."</i>			
SSR-Persistence	<i>"I would say perseverance. I mean sometimes you have those kids and you feel like giving up but you just, we don't. And I think that's consistent with our whole team. We never give up on them and I think that instills hope in our kids."</i>	5	1	2
SSR-Scaffold instruction	<i>"I think we try to do a lot of stuff that's kind of individualized towards their ability levels so that everybody's challenged with the probably appropriate level, so that they can figure out that their gonna come across things they maybe can't do right away, and then we help give them the skills and develop those to let them figure out how to do things on their own."</i>	2	2	2
SSR-Self-disclosure	<i>"I think they see us all as real people. You know, family members are involved up here, and they don't see us as somebody that's in the classroom, they see us as entire individuals you know. They, you know, they know about Teacher D's kids or Teacher B's husband, or her husband works over at the high school, you know, and they know about our lives and so they know that we're real people and that they can be real with us."</i>	1	3	3
SSR-Show interest in students	<i>"Find out something they're interested in, maybe something about their family that you can talk to them and show interest in. Like when they come back, 'Hey how was that swim meet?' You know, something they do to show that you're interested in them beyond school."</i>	5	4	6
SSR-Support students	<i>"We've got one student that at the beginning of the year was...didn't do anything...was totally not...um, didn't talk to any of the other kids. And we, you know, we problem-solved, we worked with him, we got some we got</i>	5	2	0

	<i>some things in place for him, and now he's social, he does work, he's learning, and so I think um, and then we've got examples that prove that you know we're doing something right."</i>			
SSR-Teach politeness and respect	<i>"I hate to take the negative side here, but um, I think I just don't tolerate disrespect. It doesn't happen very often, but we have this little bust ticket thing in the back of their planner that you sign if they don't um, that punctual, prepared, planner, productive, and polite, and occasionally I'll have to sign one if they're impolite to each other, and that motivates them because they know if they don't have any signatures on the ticket, they get to sign up first for the success day, and so, um, you know, I think by nipping those rare instances in the bud of 'No, we're not going to talk to each other that way. That's disrespectful. That's not the climate we're going to have.' Establishing that early on in the year."</i>	3	3	3
SSR-Visible	<i>"I think it starts with being observant. It starts with being a presence outside of the classroom."</i>	0	0	1
Student Gratitude	<i>"Well, and some of our kids, even, I had one kid who did this at my school last year, but I've got a dozen who do it here. You know, as soon as class is over, as they're walking out the door: 'Thank you.'"</i>	1	0	0
Underlying Staff Assumptions (USA)	Assumptions of staff members that may affect their perceptions of students and staff	169	183	134
USA-Administration sets the tone	<i>"I've worked in buildings where things always come from the top down, and the administration was negative, and then in turn the faculty was negative, and then in turn the students were negative. And that, um, that negative atmosphere and attitude kind of permeates through the whole school. Whereas here, it's very apparent when you walk in the building that the administration is</i>	41	3	4

	<i>happy to be here and proud to be here, and the teachers are happy and proud to be here, and then the students are as well."</i>			
USA-Building relationships influences student hope and engagement	<i>"I think that why we do that is because that's the one way we can make the best difference, is if we can make connections, somehow, whether sports, or coaching, or just getting to know those kids. That's how they change their level of hope and engagement."</i>	0	16	6
USA-Building relationships takes time	<i>"There's just there's challenges that we are trying to really use that time to build that community and build those issues within our school, um, realizing that classroom teachers just, you know, don't have time for that the way that you used to in elementary school. But it was important to us, we felt committed to it, and wanted to carve out, carve out that time."</i>	0	3	1
USA-Connections with students impact more than academic learning	<i>"Um, Teacher I, who just came in was hired at um, Christmas. Due to our large numbers, we didn't feel like we were reaching the kids as much as we should. We needed help. As a teacher with 34 kids and you're trying to do all this other stuff. Sometimes the kids get lost. And she has stepped in with another para and, um, who, who really helped us kind of make connections with kids. We had a new student just start and he said at his old school none of his teachers smiled or even knew his name, and his grades were D's and F's. I think since he's been here, even though he's not a great, great student, I feel like he has more hope in the last few days to what he's going to accomplish than he did at, before he came here."</i>	0	2	3
USA-Content taught prepares students for future	<i>"In art, you have to problem solve all the time and that's such an essential component for, um, learning about life and their future."</i>	5	0	0
USA-Developmental differences among students	<i>"Because they're developing emotionally, physically, you know and the intellectual development is what they said, a big, big range."</i>	15	11	16

USA-Don't have needed resources due to budget cuts	<i>"I'm going to put in an ad for something we used to have: teaming. Um, I started in [this district] when we started teaming, and um, it was so much easier to sit down with the four core teachers and I could say, 'I'm really having trouble with so-and-so,' um, someone else will pipe up and say, 'Well did you try this?' or 'This is the reason,' or I could say, 'Ok, so math is boring for you but look at all the fun you're having in CA...or look at all the fun you're having in social studies.' Um, we try to duplicate that in our PLC, um, but it's a lot harder. It's a lot harder...last couple of years, now, because of finances."</i>	0	0	2
USA-External environment affects students	<i>"Some kids go home to take care of siblings, so that eliminates their ability to even stay after school. And even when we're trying to help them with their grades, they can't, they try to (unclear) for some kids, some kids just don't, I have one in my class that goes home every night and his mom works all night, he fixes his dinner, and he's home by himself."</i>	14	7	22
USA-Goal setting needs to be more explicit	<i>"I feel like we should do more specific goals. Like back when I first started here, like through guided study we had goal setting sheets."</i>	0	0	3
USA-Large class size impedes building relationships	<i>"I have one idea is just, and we're fighting it now, and it's because of economics, is just the size of our classrooms are just getting larger, larger, larger every day, every year, you know. When you have a class of thirty-something versus a class of twenty-something, I mean it just makes that job that we're trying to do—make a connection with every student—that much more difficult. I mean I know it's cost efficient, I know they say it doesn't change the education of the child to have 35 kids in there, but there's something lax when you have that many kids in there."</i>	0	7	2
USA-Life skills needed to be ready for	<i>"It's not just do you do your thing for my subject, but here's what you need</i>	0	2	10

future	<i>to do for anything, whether you're in a job, whether you've got a you know something that your parents have asked you to do...the follow-through and those kind of things."</i>			
USA-Need to teach how to overcome obstacles	<i>"Teach them how to fail and get back up on there, especially the higher kids that don't experience that a lot, and understand you're going to fall down, you're going to have crappy days on tests or you know bomb something and it's ok, it's ok, it's a test, it's something, it's just a life lesson to say, 'OK, fix it, do everything you can, and move on.' So I think the failing thing's a big deal these days cause they've got to know they can get to the other side."</i>	0	9	2
USA-Negative view of student readiness for future	<i>"This group doesn't, their respectability level, they don't take responsibility for anything and like work wise they won't do the work."</i>	0	23	6
USA-Overemphasis on positivity	<i>"In fact, I'm kind of old school, but I almost think there could be a little bit more fear instilled in some of these kids (all agree). You know, they're almost too...I mean, I think it's good that they're comfortable and that this is a safe place, but I think some of them could stand to be intimidated a little bit more. I do, I think (some laugh). Especially this group that we have (some laugh)."</i>	2	2	0
USA-Overextended students	<i>"Since we're student council sponsors, I think, um, we kind of, um, were frustrated by the lack of involvement, or a little bit of apathy because I think kids are so overextended. They do so many things. I mean it's...it wasn't like if we had a walk-a-thon and you say, 'Are you coming?' It wasn't like, 'No, I don't want to do that'...It was like, 'No, I have soccer, I have baseball, or I have this or that', so they're kind of spread thin."</i>	3	0	1
USA-Parental support important	<i>"I also do that by involving parents in that because you know what, parents are the missing component sometimes for kids. And even if your child's 14</i>	15	8	10

	<i>or 16, you need to be involved in their educational experience. And that's very important."</i>			
USA-Peers influence student readiness for future	<i>"I think that there are three factors. I think it's home, peers, and teachers."</i>	0	3	0
USA-Positive view of student readiness for future	<i>"I see their future as choices...limitless."</i>	0	9	1
USA-School culture important factor	<i>"I think that the school has created an environment where it's cool and you know to respect each other, cause through like the "love is louder" assemblies and stuff like that like, I'll see students all the time that if there's something, we had to do like these drops the other day, and everyone was so excited to say like "I saw so and so pick up books for so and so" cause they had an acknowledgement and they have bought into that. You know, they pick up they're, it's cool to like put all the chairs down and do all that kind of stuff cause they see you know the positiveness that it's created. And so I think that through the assemblies and the Cougar Crew like you know they've created an environment where they are acknowledge kids that maybe...you know they'll sit with kids they maybe wouldn't at lunch, you know just befriend them."</i>	10	1	0
USA-School's engagement efforts are working	<i>"We have a lot of success with that student that comes in not knowing anybody, not having the skills and the resources that that peers around them have. And, so I think we've had a lot of great success with individual kids, moving them along, and getting them. This seems to be an easy place to fit into the, you know, the daily, you know, we've got kids that come in, you know, at the end of the third quarter they've kind of acclimated themselves and it seems to be a pretty friendly place to be."</i>	0	1	1
USA-Some teachers have knack for building relationships	<i>"I mean, I think it is so interesting, and so I think there's explicit things schools can do, but also I think</i>	0	2	0

	<i>there's an art to it...and I think some teachers just have that knack of connecting with kids and I don't know how we help teachers who maybe don't have that just intrinsic piece of them, like, 'cause I, I definitely think there's an art form in being a good teacher."</i>			
USA-Staff attitudes impact school outcomes	<i>"I think their hope comes from us. If they say that we believe in them and that we are positive towards them and our attitudes towards them and their success, that's what drives their hope now at the seventh grade level. And I think it goes back to the teachers and if, if we are feeling you know it's just kind of that pass it on kind of effect...it's really starts with the teachers...."</i>	14	7	3
USA-Staff is good	<i>"I also think that the kids can tell that they're in a building where the adults care about them. It gets very apparent that the teachers here are engaged in their jobs and that they want to be here and care about the kids' success, which makes a big difference."</i>	4	0	0
USA-Staff need to support each other	<i>"Find a connection with somebody in the building, a connection with either an adult or another student. Probably, pretty much an adult. Find that kid a connection with them somewhere."</i>	0	1	0
USA-Student affect influences engagement	<i>"I think we have an advantage teaching sixth grade versus seventh or eighth grade because it's a newness to them when they enter middle school and they kind of come in pre-engaged a little bit of wanting to meet new people and just to experience middle school in general. I think sometimes by this time of the year, it's just a little bit harder to engage them in the classroom. They're very much engaged with what socially might be happening out in the hallway, and, so that is sort of a given that kids a lot of kids I think to school in general, but, um, I would see maybe as seventh and eighth grade might be a little more of a struggle in</i>	3	2	0

	<i>the classroom, maybe to engage them. Whereas I think sixth graders generally seem eager, um, for the most part to be here."</i>			
USA-Student leaders impact intervention effectiveness	<i>Teacher E: "I don't really have a good mixture either, maybe that's why I have mixed feelings about it. 'Cause I have a big group and I don't have a mixed group of students. I have, um, I feel like I really need some strong leaders in there, and um, Teacher I: "And it does make a difference in the Crews." Interviewer: "Strong student leaders?" Teacher E: "I feel like I need some strong student leaders in my group."</i>	0	2	0
USA-Student perceptions differ from staff perceptions	<i>"They did that where they polled the kids and asked them if they had somebody that they...an adult that they could talk to. Have we done that this year? (silence) Because it's interesting to get the kids' perspective instead of just our perspective. Because a lot of the kids last year, we were like, 'Oh my gosh, how could that kid feel that way?' But the kid's opinion is the kid's opinion. If they don't feel like they don't have anybody to go to, then, most likely they aren't fitting in then. And that's scary because a lot of the kids that I would have never assumed, that I'd figure they'd have a billion friends and parents to talk to, and they said they were alone...didn't have anybody."</i>	0	0	1
USA-Students affect teacher well-being	<i>"I think that you address those student situations and problems, behavior problems, and you do it, and you don't let it get to you. Like you don't let it like personally invade and like upset your, your own well-being, you know, and just kind of like, it's that put on, you know you feel kind of sorry for the kid or you know whatever, but then you go home at the end of the night and it's not your problem. And so I think I can see where some teachers that have a lot of behavior problems could get kind</i>	3	1	0

	<i>of disenchanted and that would effect their mood and their own, you know losing patience, and like that."</i>			
USA-Students are disrespectful	<i>"And sometimes when you point that out to 'em and say, You know that's disrespectful.' They're like, 'Oh.' You know, they didn't think of it as being the things they say or do. They don't realize or haven't thought through that that would be disrespectful or hurt someone's feelings."</i>	0	4	0
USA-Students are good	<i>"We've got good kids."</i>	12	0	1
USA-Students are naive/immature	<i>"They think they're more prepared than they really are. They think they're more worldly than they are."</i>	2	3	3
USA-Students cannot see far into future	<i>"I think our frustration lies in the fact that the kids at this point in their lives in the middle school time, they don't realize what they're future holds. I mean, when you talk to them about 'You'll need this information for college' or 'You'll need this information for high school,' they think of tomorrow as opposed to future, and so I think all we can do is just share with them as much as we know and care for them and things like that and then eventually one day they'll say, 'Oh, that's why we were told that' or 'That's why they were so focused on doing these things.' But it's very difficult at this point because they don't see a future, they don't see college, they don't see, they see tomorrow."</i>	0	2	3
USA-Students do not get enough support at home	<i>"I think safety is a big thing here. It's a safe place. They know there's rules, they know, and sometimes they need that, they need that black and white because they, you know, at home it's not that way. There is no structure, there is no support, so when they come here, they know that that they're safe and they know that there's rules and there's structure, and I think for some of them that is comfort."</i>	0	1	3
USA-Students have	<i>"They're [in honors classes] by</i>	0	0	2

not earned honors status	<i>choice, not by that their grades warranted that they be there. So it's by parent choice."</i>			
USA-Students lack initiative/motivation	<i>"And I think the reason like I said passive or passivity for my one word is that I feel like these kids really lack any initiative to do anything by themselves."</i>	0	9	0
USA-Students responsible for outcomes	<i>"I know that high school is not going to be an easy ride for them, um, and it shouldn't be, because most of them have the intellect to do whatever they want to do. It's just a matter of whether or not they want to do it."</i>	10	10	4
USA-Teachers influence readiness for the future	<i>"I think teachers have a huge impact. I would think that's why most of us get into education. As we go into education thinking we're going to make a difference in students' lives...and when we think of that we're not thinking about just making a difference for this year, we're thinking about making a difference for the rest of their lives."</i>	15	18	11
USA-Testing emphasis reduces time available for socio-emotional connection	<i>"I think, too, that we have to, we have to feel like we have permission that in this world of test, test, test, 'I don't have time to do anything but this, I've got to get this done because we've got to review this because we've got this coming up,' you know, just throw things out the window one day and just say, "Do something fun that gets everybody involved in what's going on," whether it necessarily has to with your particular subject or whatever. I think that's the tough thing. You've got to do that. We feel so pressured, like our principal said, we feel so pressured and we're trying to get everything done and we've got to get tests done or we've got to get through this because we've got this coming up and so on, but every once in a while you just have to say, 'Okay, whoa, stop.' And just kind of sit and listen to what they have to say, do something fun where you can just wander around and listen to what they have to say and what they're</i>	0	3	0

	<i>thinking.</i>			
USA-Well-being interventions don't work	<i>Teacher A: "We have a student well-being plan which focuses on bullying, substance abuse, um, healthy relationships, what's the fourth one? Cultural diversity." Teacher C: "I don't really think any of that works (sighs)."</i>	0	0	1
USA-Well-being is whole-school focus	<i>"I feel like this year we've been working on student well-being a lot."</i>	0	1	0
USA-Worried about students' future success	<i>"I'm really, really worried about our kids being able to follow through as they go on."</i>	0	10	12